

POPPY COOKS



THE ACTUALLY DELICIOUS SLOW COOKER COOKBOOK

Step up your slow
cooking with 90 effortless,
flavour-packed recipes

B L O O M S B U R Y

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**To my Grandma Pat,
whom we sadly lost in 2023.**

If I'm honest, I don't think she ever used a slow cooker.
I wish she had – because it would have made this dedication a lot easier.
She did love a stew, though.
And a 12am bacon sandwich.

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INTRODUCTION

SOUPS

CHICKEN

BEEF

LAMB

PORK

TURKEY

VEGGIE

POTATOES

DESSERTS

INDEX

THANK YOU

ABOUT POPPY

Welcome to *The Actually Delicious Slow Cooker Cookbook*.

A title that, if we're honest, is a bit of a mouthful. But what a great way to get you excited for the book with a delicious mouthful of a title to start off with.

I want to begin by saying I have developed a fear of writing these intros. One thing that sparked this internalised terror is that someone reviewed my last book saying it was good but 'she talks about herself too much in the intro and sounds like she wants to be famous'. I mean, let's think about what an introduction is all about: introducing you to the wonders of what's ahead in the book. And yes, there's a lot about slow cookers in here, but also there's a lot of me in this book too, and it's good to get a bit of context behind why I'm here, who I am and what we can learn together. I'd also like to point out that I don't 'want to be famous'. In fact, I've already reached the dizzying heights of fame by appearing on episodes of *Celebrity Weakest Link* and *Celebrity Mastermind*; plus, I've sat alongside Gregg Wallace on the *MasterChef* Chef's Table and I once judged Kim Woodburn's carbonara on *Celebrity Cooking School* (Season One). I've already made it.

Now let's get into the main reason I am scared to write this intro. In all honesty, I am absolutely rubbish at facts, figures and checking things before or after writing them. When I talk about

my career, sometimes I say I started in 2012, sometimes 2010 or maybe even 2022. There are articles written about me where it says I'm aged somewhere between 26 and 29, even though they were all written in the same year. It's not because I'm a liar – I'm just terrible at dates (although I can just about remember I was born in 1994).

Also, in my last book, *The Actually Delicious Air Fryer Cookbook*, I started the intro saying I was born in Birmingham, 'the third biggest city in the UK'. A number of people (mostly Brummies) messaged me asking how I even dare question the size of the 'Second City'! One lady even said she returned the book based on this error. Well, I'll have you know, that even though our beautiful Birmingham is known as the 'Second City', according to statistics in 2022, Manchester (including its suburbs) overtook Birmingham in population. I say that, but then another source said that Glasgow was actually the UK's second biggest city and not Manchester nor Birmingham. So, you know what? I am from the Second-City-That-May-Actually-Be-Third-But-Is-Deffo-At-Least-Top-Four city known as Birmingham.

I also wrote in the exact same opening paragraph of my last book that Birmingham is home to Ozzy Osbourne and the chicken tikka masala. Although someone will probably now tell me that Ozzy is from Newcastle or something, the more glaring error I found out is that the Tikka Masala actually originated in Glasgow (the third or fourth biggest city in the UK, maybe the fifth). What I meant to say is that the British version of the balti, which originated in North India and some parts of Pakistan, was developed in 1977 in Birmingham. I've checked Wikipedia this time, so you know it's factual. But I got confused as I absolutely LOVE a chicken tikka masala.

To be fair to me, though, when I was writing an air-fryer cookbook, I was expecting about ten people to buy it. However, it turns out around 100,000 of you did in the end, and that's a lot of eyes looking at me and reading my 'facts'. So, given that only about ten people got in touch noticing the above, 99.99% of you either didn't notice or just got on with it. That's the thing, I wouldn't buy this book for my wealth of factual knowledge, but one thing I can deliver is delicious food on your plate that's guaranteed to make your day better. Who needs facts anyway?

So, like I said, my name is Polly O'Toole and I am aged 21 from Birmingham, the UK's second-biggest city and home of Noel Edmonds and the Lancashire Hot Pot...



No but seriously, my name is Poppy O'Toole, I am from Birmingham and ... at the time of writing, I am actually one week away from turning 30. That's pretty scary given that my first restaurant job was when I was 17. I worked in fine-dining restaurants up until 2020, when I lost my job as restaurants were forced to shut across the country. I was made redundant in March, and started posted videos on social media in order to a) keep myself busy and b) make my younger siblings Christian and Trixie think I was cool.

I was posting recipe videos on TikTok – tutorials on how to make the perfect tomato sauce and churros from scratch, and my

third video was cooking homemade chips (my first toe-dip into potato-based content). I loved being able to read the comments of people trying the recipes, enjoying the techniques and finding my content useful. It became a bit of a hobby to keep my mind occupied with the view to get back working in kitchens as soon as they reopened.

This was my first glimpse into what can be achieved on social media and, equally, how potatoes would change my life. I did a recipe video recreating a McDonald's hashbrown that, in all honesty, didn't go viral. I think it got about 6k views; nothing special in the social-media universe where I was looking up to other creators getting millions of views a day. But it did end up in a national newspaper. Well, on a national newspaper's website.

And I remember thinking that this was it. I've made it. The article read something like 'Chef shows how to recreate fast food favourite dish'. Reading myself being referred to as a 'chef' that people wanted to read about just made me all excited. It was then picked up by a number of other news outlets, including one in Australia and, honestly, if that was the end of my story, I'd have been happy because I felt like I peaked there and then.

That was a lovely bit of fun, but in August of 2020, when furlough wrapped up (where the government were supporting employers by contributing towards their staff's salaries), and my previous employers fully made me redundant, I realised I needed to get back into work. Part of me had enjoyed not being in hospitality full time for the first time since I'd started my fine-dining apprenticeship at a Michelin-starred restaurant at 18. And when I say working 'full time', I mean 7am mornings, finishing at

11.30pm, with an hour break in the middle if you're lucky, five days a week, with your two days off being on Sunday (when you're too exhausted to communicate with family) and Monday (when everyone else is at work). The pandemic and the lockdown that followed had allowed me to spend time with family again, and I loved it. Eating dinners together, evenings watching TV on the sofa, dog walks on a Saturday, being around for family birthdays. It made me realise how much of life I had missed out on in the last seven years working in the restaurant industry.



I started applying for jobs in local supermarkets, and got rejected from a fair few, but I think it was because I accidentally clicked 'unwilling to work nights' on a job at the frozen supermarket Iceland, which was titled 'Night Shift Manager'. So, I don't blame them really.

I got my first viral TikTok video that August. We're talking one million people watching me making a crispy cube potato dish (essentially miniature roast potatoes, which I smothered in parmesan and parsley). I was blown away. It triggered my first few brand deals where food brands actually paid me, albeit not that much, to feature their products in my videos. This meant I could contribute towards rent and keep making videos, while still getting rejected from the part-time jobs I was applying for.

This takes us to November 2020 – a pivotal month in my career. The UK was put into another lockdown – for 25 days. Given the success of my potato video from a few months prior, I decided to do a series online called '25 Days of Potato Recipes To Get You Through A Second Lockdown'. Can you tell I like a catchy title?

This is where my life was literally flipped on its head. Life-changing you could say. It cemented my career as the case study for just how your life can change because of potatoes. The videos did well. I grew from around 60k TikTok followers to around 100k, which was huge for me. But it was on one of the days, I think towards the 22nd day of potato recipes, I made a compilation with the voiceover 'Welcome to Potato TikTok'. I woke up the next day to 1,000,000 TikTok followers. Overnight. I was in absolute shock. And it fully threw me into the world where creating content, developing recipes and, now, writing books became my full-time job.

A lot of blood, starch and potato trimmings later, here we are. I somehow have over five million followers online, a number I can't quite comprehend. I'm a chef that gets to live her dream of cooking on TV, from cooking live on *Saturday Kitchen* and *This Morning*, to appearing as a judge on *MasterChef*. I've met and worked with my idols such as Nigella, Ainsley Harriott and Michel Roux Jr; Rick Stein even said on the radio that I was one to watch and Nigella called me the 'High Priestess of Potatoes'. I've written (now) three books, with my air-fryer cookbook literally #1 in ALL BOOKS on Amazon, which even if it was just for about six hours, is still a pretty cool achievement.

It's been an absolute whirlwind and it's thanks to you. Yes, you. Because you've gone out of your way to buy this book, and support a carb-loving girl who somehow stumbled into this madness. I don't take any of it for granted and appreciate every day. In return, I want to make sure you're eating delicious food on every single one of those days, too.

This takes us nicely on to the slow cooker. Oh, the slow cooker. The humble creator of deliciousness. I love a slow cooker. It's not fancy. It's not in your face. It just does its job and it does it well. Does it need to show off and rush out a meal? No. It knows that time can make some things so much better.

Is there any better feeling than throwing all your ingredients into a slow cooker at the start of the day and coming back to the BEAUTY of a slow-cooked tasty meal just bubbling away in front of you? That is exactly what I wanted from this book. No fuss, no frills, just delicious, easy slow-cooker meals.

I have made sure there is hardly any prep before each dish and have minimised as much as I physically can the number of times you have to come back to the pot to check it or add something, while still making sure the results are delicious. Who wants to sear their meat for 20 minutes before tipping it into the bowl, and to then have to come back to it to stir and add more ingredients every 65 minutes while it slow cooks? No thank you – we want stress-free recipes with actually delicious results.

If you have a ‘dump bag’ of ready-prepped ingredients in the freezer, they’re ideal for defrosting overnight and just throwing in the slow cooker ready for a delicious dinner when you get home from work – perfect.



As well as their convenience and being super energy efficient, even better is that slow cookers are incredibly straightforward to use, with most having just a low or high setting, so no faff, no frills, just great meals every time. The recipes in this book have been tested in a few different slow cookers, and from the basics to the high-end versions, they're consistent in the results. Always check your slow cooker, but generally they're dishwasher safe, saving time on the washing up, and most of the ceramic pots are oven-safe.

From beef stew to banana bread, chicken soup to spaghetti bolognese, loaded potatoes to chicken tikka masala (from

Glasgow!), this book is full of easy and tasty recipes that I want you to want to cook time and again. This is the slow-cooker book that is stained in red wine because it's been on the side as you cook the bourguignon for the fourth time that year. It's doused in cream as you've made the dauphinoise potatoes to show off to your neighbours that you cook French potato dishes now. It's got a treacle stain on the [index](#) page because since you found out you can make treacle sponges in the slow cooker, you've done it two Sundays in a row. That's what cookbooks are about for me. You love them, you love using them and they become part of the kitchen furniture.

And you want the food to be delicious.
Like ... Actually Delicious.

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SOUPS.

SPICY GOCHUJANG NOODLE SOUP

If you're new to gochujang, you've just discovered your newest go-to ingredient. This paste is a staple in Korean cooking and is basically what you'd get if sriracha and miso had a baby. It's utterly amazing when used in marinades, stews and soups. Give it a go. Then buy an industrial-sized tub of it.

Serves 4

3 hours on high / 5 hours on low / + 5 minutes on high or 10 minutes on low for the noodles

4–6 skinless, boneless chicken thighs

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 thumb-size piece of ginger, peeled and finely chopped

1 teaspoon sesame oil

2 teaspoons dark soy sauce, plus extra to season if needed

2–3 tablespoons gochujang chilli paste

2 teaspoons red or white miso paste

½ head of Chinese cabbage or Savoy cabbage, roughly chopped

300g medium straight-to-wok noodles

2 spring onions, thinly sliced, to serve

1. Throw everything apart from the cabbage, noodles and spring onions into the bowl of your slow cooker and mix well. Add 1 litre of water, put the lid on and cook on high for 3 hours or on low for 5 hours, until the chicken is cooked and tender.

2. Remove the chicken from the broth and throw in the cabbage. Put the lid on again. Chop or shred the chicken into small pieces, then return it to the slow cooker and add the noodles. Leave them to heat through, with the lid on, for 5 minutes on high or 10 minutes on low. Adjust the seasoning with extra soy if needed, and serve the noodle soup in deep bowls, topped with sliced spring onions.

MY SUGGESTIONS

I serve my noodle soups with plenty of topping options – some sweetcorn charred in a smoking-hot pan with some salt, and sliced spring onions, crispy chilli oil, sesame oil, soy-marinated eggs (see [here](#)), chopped fresh herbs ... whatever you can think of!

You'll want a delicious side of kimchi – another Korean ingredient that is now readily available in most supermarkets. It's a spicy, fermented cabbage – let me tell you, I'm addicted!



BROCCOLI AND CHEESE SOUP

This soup is a bit like me – smooth, cheesy and a bit thick. Although it may not sound like the most exciting soup, sometimes the best recipes are truly the simplest and this is one of them. And there's always something that makes you feel good about eating this much green, even if it is laced with cheese.

Serves 4

4 hours on high / 5-6 hours on low / + 15 minutes on high

2 broccoli heads

1 onion, chopped

1 carrot, chopped

1 small leek or ½ large one, sliced

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1.1 litres chicken or vegetable stock

100g extra-mature cheddar, grated or 100g stilton, crumbled

100ml double cream

salt and black pepper

1. Cut the florets off the broccoli stalk and slice most of them into rough slices (reserving some whole florets for garnish, if you like – see my suggestions, below). Chop up the broccoli stalks, too. Throw all of the chopped broccoli and the other vegetables into the bowl of your slow cooker and season with salt and pepper.

2. Pour in the stock, put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 5–6 hours, until the broccoli is completely cooked through.
3. Once the broccoli is tender, add all but a couple of tablespoons of the cheese to the bowl of your slow cooker, put the lid on and leave it to cook for 15 minutes more (on high), then pour in the cream. Using a hand-held stick blender, blitz the soup until smooth. Serve and garnish with the reserved cheese.

MY SUGGESTIONS

I like to serve this with some crispy air-fryer broccoli florets to give a bit of texture to the whole affair. Preheat your air fryer to 200°C. Drizzle your reserved broccoli florets with a little oil – use chilli oil if you like; I like things spicy – and throw them into the air fryer for 10 minutes, until crispy. If you don't have an air fryer, pop the oiled florets onto a baking tray and bake them in the oven at 200°C/180°C fan for 10–15 minutes, instead.



'NDUJA AND CANNELLINI BEAN SOUP

There is nothing better than dunking a slice of buttered crusty baguette into this Italian-inspired soup. The addition of 'nduja smacks you with a hit of spice, while providing all that lovely umami, making this dish more warming than sitting in a wool onesie beside a roaring fire.

Serves 4

 3½ hours on high / + 25–30 minutes to cook the pasta

1 onion, sliced

2 carrots, finely diced

2 fat garlic cloves, grated or crushed

2 celery sticks, finely diced

3 rosemary sprigs, leaves picked

85g 'nduja paste

1 tablespoon tomato purée

1 x 400g can of cherry tomatoes

1 teaspoon white sugar

1.2 litres chicken stock

2 x 400g cans of cannellini beans, drained

1 parmesan rind (optional)

150g short pasta (I love mafalda corta or mezzi tubetti)

200g cavolo nero, sliced

salt and black pepper

extra-virgin olive oil and sea-salt flakes, to serve

1. Add the onion, carrots, garlic, celery, rosemary, 'nduja, tomato purée, cherry tomatoes, sugar, stock, cannellini beans, parmesan rind (if using), 1 teaspoon of salt and plenty of black pepper to the bowl of your slow cooker and stir everything together. Put the lid on and cook on high for 3½ hours, until the vegetables are tender. Then, using a hand-held stick blender, roughly blitz half of the soup to thicken slightly.
2. Stir in the pasta, then sit the cavolo nero on top (don't worry about stirring it in as it will steam) and put the lid on again for a final 25–30 minutes, until the pasta is al dente. Turn off the heat and season to taste with salt and pepper. Divide the soup between four bowls and drizzle with extra-virgin olive oil and a pinch of sea-salt flakes.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Feel free to substitute the 'nduja for a plant-based version (available in some supermarkets), making this a lovely, spicy, veggie soup.

Plenty of crusty buttered bread is the only way to go with the serving here. Heat up your bread in the oven and serve it hot, thickly spread with proper butter.



LAKSA

A huge shout-out to my friend Evelyn who taught me everything you could know about laksas. Together, we would go to a delicious laksa place in Soho and eat to our hearts' content. You can buy laksa paste in most supermarkets, but I've included the ingredients to make it at home, if you want to show off how fancy you are.

Serves 4

| Time: 3 hours on high / + 15-20 minutes to cook the beans

3-4 tablespoons laksa paste (see the suggestions)

2 lemongrass sticks, bruised

handful of fresh curry leaves

400ml full-fat coconut milk

1 litre chicken or vegetable stock

1 teaspoon light brown soft or palm sugar, plus extra to taste if needed

1 teaspoon salt or dark soy sauce, plus extra to taste if needed

200g green beans, trimmed

100g bean sprouts

300g medium straight-to-wok rice noodles

3-4 limes, halved, to taste

small handful of coriander, roughly chopped (stems and all)

2-3 red chillies, deseeded and thinly sliced

1. Add the laksa paste, lemongrass sticks, curry leaves, coconut milk, stock, sugar and salt or soy sauce to the bowl of your slow cooker, then stir to combine. Put the lid on and cook on high for 3 hours, until fragrant.
2. Stir in the beans, bean sprouts, noodles and the squeezed juice from half of the lime halves. Put the lid on again and cook for another 15–20 minutes, until the beans and bean sprouts are just cooked.
3. Taste to check the seasoning, adjusting as necessary and adding more salt (or soy) or sugar to balance the flavour. Scoop out the lemongrass sticks, divide the laksa between deep bowls and scatter over the coriander and fresh chilli. Cut the remaining lime halves into wedges and serve alongside for squeezing.

MY SUGGESTIONS

To make your own laksa paste, you'll need 4 roughly chopped shallots, a thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and roughly chopped, 4 peeled garlic cloves, 2 red chillies, stalks removed, a handful of coriander, 2 teaspoons mild curry powder and 2 roughly chopped lemongrass sticks. Blitz together to a coarse paste and store in an airtight jar in the fridge for 1 week, or 3 months in the freezer.

I've kept this recipe a blank canvas for some extra jazzing up:

- Marinate prawns in some of the laksa paste with an extra drizzle of oil while the laksa cooks. Quickly fry them in a hot frying pan and serve on top. (As shown in the photo.)
- Add 2 chicken breasts to the recipe at the beginning.
- Deep-fry some tofu cubes and serve them in the laksa.

- Get some pork belly pieces, dry them with a paper towel and sprinkle with salt. Leave them overnight in the fridge to draw out the moisture, then pat thoroughly dry again. Preheat the oven to 220°C/200°C fan. Get a wire rack in a roasting tray. When the oven is ready, get the pork belly on the rack and roast it for 30 minutes, then turn the heat down to 170°C/150°C fan and cook for a further 15–20 minutes. The pieces should be golden and crispy. Cut into slices and serve on top of your laksa.



RAMEN

Ramen in a slow cooker was a revelation for me. It's the perfect cooking vessel for throwing it all in and enjoying something hearty later in the day. This beautiful machine isn't just for stews and spag bols!

Serves 4

 4 hours on high / + 5-10 minutes for the noodles

2 onions, thinly sliced

thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and julienned or grated

4 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

2-4 red chillies, deseeded and thinly sliced, to taste

2 x 280g blocks of firm tofu, drained and cut into 1cm pieces

4 tablespoons white miso paste

4 litres chicken stock

4 x 100g nests of instant ramen noodles, including seasoning sachets

½ leek or 8 spring onions, shredded

dark soy sauce, to taste

your favourite chilli oil, to taste

1. Add the onions, ginger, garlic, chillies, tofu, miso, stock and noodle seasoning sachets to the bowl of your slow cooker. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours, until the onions have softened.

2. When the ramen is nearly ready, put the shredded leek or spring onions into a bowl and cover with ice-cold water. This will stiffen them and make them curl up.
3. After 4 hours, add the instant noodles to the slow cooker, put the lid on again and cook for another 5-10 minutes, until just cooked.
4. Divide the ramen between deep bowls, then season to taste with soy sauce and chilli oil. Drain the leek or spring onions and add a handful to each bowl.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Try some soy-marinated eggs to go on the top of your ramen – they are super-simple but look and taste great. Hard boil and peel 4 eggs and pop them into a bowl. Mix together 4 grated garlic cloves, 200ml of Japanese soy sauce, 100ml of mirin (rice vinegar), 2-3 teaspoons of sesame oil and a good pinch of chilli flakes and pour the mixture over the eggs. Leave them in the fridge ideally overnight, and when you're ready to use them just cut them in half and you'll have a deliciously seasoned egg for your ramen.



CARROT AND CARAWAY SOUP

Caraway is an underestimated herb. It doesn't get the same love as say rosemary or thyme. It's a unique almost aniseed-y flavour that can put people off, but use it in the right combos and it is an absolute winner. This is where carrots come into play. They make for the perfect partner that works wonders with the caraway so this soup will hit all the right notes.

Serves 4

 4 hours on high

4 carrots (about 500g in total), halved lengthways and cut into 2cm slices

1 tablespoon tomato purée

2 celery sticks, finely diced

1 red onion, finely diced

2 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

1 rosemary sprig, leaves picked

1 x 400g can of brown lentils, rinsed and drained

½ teaspoon caraway seeds

1 teaspoon cumin seeds

pinch of chilli flakes, plus extra to serve

800ml chicken or vegetable stock

salt and black pepper

To serve (optional)

crème fraîche

feta, crumbled

small handful of coriander, leaves roughly chopped

crispy lentils

garlic croûtons

1. Add the carrots, tomato purée, celery, onion, garlic, rosemary, lentils, caraway seeds, cumin seeds and chilli flakes to the bowl of your slow cooker. Add the stock and season with 1 teaspoon of salt and plenty of black pepper, then stir everything together. Cook on high for 4 hours, until the carrots are tender.
2. Using a hand-held stick blender, roughly blitz about half of the soup, so that it thickens. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed.
3. Divide the soup between four bowls and dollop on some crème fraîche. Serve with your chosen toppings (IMO this soup lives and dies by its toppings) – my go-to would be a mix and match of crumbled feta, coriander, crispy lentils and garlic croûtons (or go to town and throw them all on).

MY SUGGESTIONS

This soup is great with any toppings you fancy; use soft goat's cheese instead of feta, other soft herbs like dill or parsley if you don't love coriander, or a cheese toastie instead of croûtons.

You can make an accompaniment of a super-simple flat bread using Greek yoghurt and flour: get equal amounts of Greek yoghurt and self-

raising flour into a bowl with some more caraway seeds and some salt, then bring them together into a dough. Set aside to rest for 30 minutes and then divide the dough equally according to the size you want your flat breads (each one needs to be about 2mm thick when rolled out). Roll out the portions of dough and in a large, very hot, dry frying pan, fry your flat breads to get some colour on them. You can keep them warm in the oven while you keep frying more. Perfect for dunking.



MUSHROOM SOUP

Step away from the can opener and put down the can, because this soup is super-creamy, super-earthly and has a depth of flavour that you won't find in any grocery aisle. I must admit I'm not opposed to the ping of a microwave but there is something so magical in having your own homemade soup cooking away in the background.

Serves 4

| 3 hours on high / 4 hours on low / + 25-30 minutes in the oven to start

300g chestnut mushrooms, roughly sliced

3 large, flat field mushrooms, roughly sliced

3 garlic cloves, sliced

1 large onion, sliced

vegetable oil, for drizzling

30g dried mushrooms (such as porcini)

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

50ml brandy

1 vegetable stock cube

½ tablespoon yeast extract

80g butter, cubed

salt and black pepper

small handful of parsley, leaves roughly chopped (optional)

1. Preheat your oven to 180°C/160°C fan. Throw all the sliced fresh mushrooms, the garlic and onion in a roasting tray and drizzle with vegetable oil. Season well with salt and pepper, then roast in the oven for 15–20 minutes, until starting to colour. Meanwhile, rehydrate the dried mushrooms in just enough boiling water to cover them. Leave to soak and rehydrate for 10 minutes, then drain and chop.
2. Once the roasting mushrooms are starting to colour, remove the tray from the oven and throw in the balsamic vinegar, the drained and chopped dried mushrooms and the brandy, then return the tray to the oven for another 10 minutes, until it's all looking golden.
3. Spoon all of the mushroom mixture and the juices in the tray into the bowl of your slow cooker and add the stock cube. Almost cover everything with boiling water, then stir through the yeast extract. Put the lid on and leave to cook on high for 3 hours or on low for 4 hours.
4. When the timer is up, use a hand-held stick blender to blitz the mushroom mixture to a smooth soup, adding in the diced butter a few cubes at a time to help it to come together. Taste and adjust the seasoning, as necessary, scatter with parsley and serve.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Mushroom soup is perfect with a poached egg. Put a large pan of water over a high heat with a splash of white wine vinegar. Bring it to just below a simmer. Create a small whirlpool in the water using a whisk and crack in your eggs. Allow to cook for 4–5 minutes, until the white is completely cooked but the yolk is still runny. Serve with a poached egg

in the centre of the bowl and pour the soup around, so when the yolk bursts it helps to enrich the soup. I also like to drizzle over some extra-virgin olive oil for a bit of extra flavour.

This soup only gets better the longer you leave it in the slow cooker, so don't be shy of giving this one a long time – it's definitely delicious after 4 hours, but a bit of extra time never hurt anyone.



ROASTED TOMATO SOUP

Is there anything more hearty on this planet than roasted tomato soup? I can't think of a dish that warms your cockles more – it's exactly what you want if you're feeling under the weather and you need a pick-me-up. And you can serve it up with an outrageously stuffed grilled-cheese sandwich to fulfil your dreams of the perfect lunch.

Serves 4–6

3 hours on high / 4 hours on low / + 10–15 minutes in the oven to start

1kg tomatoes (use all different shapes and sizes, if you like)

1 onion, sliced

2 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

25ml balsamic vinegar, plus extra if needed

vegetable oil, for drizzling

1 jar of roasted red peppers, drained and roughly chopped into large pieces

3–4 sun-dried tomatoes, drained and chopped

200ml tomato passata

1 tablespoon tomato purée

1 chicken or vegetable stock cube, crumbled

small handful of basil, leaves picked

50g butter, cubed

white sugar, to taste, if needed

salt and black pepper

1. Preheat your oven to 200°C/180°C fan. Throw the tomatoes, onion, garlic, balsamic vinegar and a drizzle of oil into a roasting tin, season well with salt and pepper and toss to coat. Roast the tomatoes in the oven for 10–15 minutes, until starting to blister and char.
2. Spoon the roasted tomato mixture into the slow-cooker bowl and add the remaining ingredients aside from the basil, butter and sugar, and pour in 550ml of water. Cover with the lid and cook on high for 3 hours or on low for 4 hours, until the tomatoes have cooked down and gone mushy. Then, throw in most of the basil and blitz the soup using a hand-held stick blender, adding in the cubed butter, a few cubes at a time, while you blend. Taste the soup for seasoning, and add salt, balsamic vinegar or sugar as needed to balance out the flavours.

MY SUGGESTIONS

You have to have tomato soup with a cheese toastie – I don't make the rules. Preheat a frying pan over medium heat and butter both sides of some white bread or sourdough. Load the bread with grated cheese (a mixture of strong cheddar and mozzarella works well) and sandwich it together. Fry on both sides until golden brown and the cheese is melty. Using a bread knife, cut off the crusts (keep these for dipping!) and slice the grilled-cheese sandwich into squares to use as croûtons on the top of the soup. If you want a bit of spice, spread the inside of your toastie with some chilli jam.



CHIPOTLE BEAN SOUP

Beans in a soup make all the difference. They add that extra level of filling that means maybe you don't need the bread on the side. Then again, is any soup really worth it without a crusty loaf to dip into it? I'm not sure on that. But with bread or without it, this soup is absolutely delicious.

Serves 4

| 4 hours on high / + 10 minutes to cook the cavolo nero

1 onion, thinly sliced

1 butternut squash, peeled, deseeded and cut into 1cm dice

2 celery sticks, finely diced

2 fat garlic cloves, grated or crushed

small handful of thyme, leaves picked

1 x 400g can of cannellini beans, drained

1 x 400g can of borlotti beans, drained

1-2 tablespoons chipotle paste

½-1 teaspoon cayenne pepper

1 teaspoon dried oregano

800ml chicken or vegetable stock

200g cavolo nero, sliced

salt and black pepper

sea-salt flakes and chilli flakes or sliced red chilli, to serve

1. Add the onion, squash, celery, garlic, thyme, cannellini beans, borlotti beans, chipotle, cayenne pepper, oregano and stock to the bowl of your slow cooker. Season with 1 teaspoon of salt and plenty of pepper and stir everything together. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours, until the squash is soft enough to squish with a fork.
2. Use a hand-held stick blender to blitz roughly half of the soup, so that it thickens, then stir in the cavolo nero, pop the lid back on and cook for another 10 minutes on high, until tender. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed.
3. Divide the soup between four bowls and serve each with a pinch of sea-salt flakes and chilli.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Use whatever beans you have! Everyone has some weird cans shoved in the back of the cupboard, so this soup is a great way to use some of them up and make a hearty, protein-filled lunch. If you can't find any cavolo nero you can use any other variety of cabbage, or even just a few big handfuls of spinach to wilt down into the soup.



FRENCH ONION SOUP

You need to try this immediately. And feel naughty. But good ... oh-so good because it's full to the brim with soft and succulent onions and a healthy glug of white wine. I strongly recommend topping it all off with a slab of toasted sourdough with lashings of melted Swiss gruyère cheese. This is the perfect meal to enjoy on a cold winter's evening by the fire, surrounded by even more white wine.

Serves 4

4 hours on high / 8 hours on low / + 5-10 minutes under the grill

750g onions, thinly sliced

small handful of thyme, leaves picked

1 bay leaf (optional)

30g butter, cubed

1.2 litres beef stock

200ml dry white wine

splash of olive oil (optional)

½ tablespoon cornflour, slackened with water (optional)

1 baguette, sliced

150g gruyère or emmental, grated

salt and black pepper

1. Add the onions, thyme, bay leaf (if using), butter, stock, wine and olive oil (if using) the bowl of your slow cooker. Season with 1

teaspoon of salt and lots of black pepper, then put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 8 hours, until rich and tender. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed. If you prefer your French onion soup a little thicker, stir in the cornflour slurry.

2. Once the soup is cooked, preheat the grill to high, then remove the bowl from the slow cooker. If your slow cooker bowl is ovensafe, lay the slices of baguette on top and cover them with the cheese. Slide the bowl under the grill for 5–10 minutes, until golden and bubbling. If your slow cooker doesn't fit under the grill, or isn't ovensafe, you can do this once the soup is served into individual bowls (as long as they are heatproof).

MY SUGGESTIONS

French onion soup will always be one of the most well-known soups going. The nuttiness of the cheese on top just adds the perfect bit of final seasoning. This is a recipe that freezes well, so all you have to do when you defrost it is pop a bit of baguette and gruyère or emmental on top and chuck it under the grill. Wham! Bam! Thank you, ma'am!



CHORIZO, GOAT'S CHEESE AND BUTTER BEAN SOUP

This is a luscious soup with a meaty kick that is more than capable of becoming a main meal. Plus, if you've got a can of butter beans languishing on the shelf, this recipe will put them to good use and then you'll wonder why you didn't make more butter-bean-based meals.

Serves 4

 4 hours on high

2 leeks (about 500g in total), thinly sliced

2 carrots, finely diced

2 celery sticks, finely diced

2 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

190g cooking chorizo, diced

1 x 400g can of chopped tomatoes

1 tablespoon tomato purée

1 teaspoon caster sugar

2 x 400g cans of butter beans, drained

800ml chicken or vegetable stock

2 rosemary sprigs

small handful of thyme

1 bay leaf

200g kale, sliced

salt and black pepper

To serve

120g hard goat's cheese, grated

extra-virgin olive oil

100g hazelnuts, toasted and roughly chopped (optional)

1. Add the leeks, carrots, celery, garlic, chorizo, chopped tomatoes, tomato purée, sugar, butter beans, stock, rosemary, thyme and bay leaf to the bowl of your slow cooker. If you're feeling fancy, tie the herbs in a bundle with some kitchen string, but if not, just wang them straight in there and fish out the stems once the soup is cooked. Season with 1 teaspoon of salt and a generous amount of black pepper. Stir everything together, put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours, until the vegetables are tender. When the timer has 10-15 minutes left, stir in the kale, then put the lid back on and patiently wait for the timer to go off.
2. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed, then divide the soup between four bowls. Sprinkle over the goat's cheese, followed by a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil, a scattering of hazelnuts (if using) and lots more black pepper.

MY SUGGESTIONS

I love a couple of hefty sourdough croûtons with this soup. Rip up that stale end of sourdough that always just ends up in the bin, drizzle with oil (flavoured oils work really well for this – chilli, garlic, basil, whatever your nan last brought you back from her holidays), season with salt and pepper and roast in a hot oven at about 200°C/180°C fan for 15-20

minutes or in the air fryer at 200°C for 5–10 minutes, until golden and crunchy, tossing occasionally.



HEARTY WHOLE CHICKEN SOUP

This is a recipe my mom would always cook. In my last book, I called my mom 'Mom' and someone messaged saying don't forget your British roots, don't change and start calling your mom 'Mom'. But just FYI, in Birmingham everyone calls their mom 'Mom' and not 'Mum'. I'm not sure why. True story – we once ate my mom's chicken soup that had been left out for days on the stove and the whole family started hallucinating because obviously something had gone off. So that was quite the Sunday lunch.

Serves 4–6

3 hours on high / 6 hours on low / + 20 minutes on high to cook the veg

1 whole chicken (about 1.4–1.8kg)

3 white potatoes, peeled and quartered

3–4 carrots, peeled and cut into thick slices

1 onion, diced

1 leek, chopped

4 garlic cloves, chopped

2 chicken stock cubes

500ml boiling water

4 small corn-on-the-cobs, halved to make 8 mini cobs

2 thyme sprigs

100g sugar snap peas

salt and black pepper

1. Season the chicken all over with salt and pepper and place it in the bowl of your slow cooker. You may have to manoeuvre the chicken to make it fit. Add the potatoes, carrots, onion, leek and garlic to the bowl.
2. Dissolve the stock cubes in the 500ml of boiling water and pour it around the chicken. Put the lid on and cook on high for 3 hours or on low for 6 hours, turning the chicken half way through, until it is cooked through. Remove it from the slow cooker and separate the meat from the bones.
3. Add the picked down chicken back to the bowl. If the slow cooker has been on low, turn it to high (otherwise leave it high) and add the mini cobs, thyme and peas. Cook for 20 minutes, until the veg are tender.
4. Season heavily once more with black pepper and salt and serve up in bowls. (Whoever gets the thyme sprigs has to do the washing up.)

MY SUGGESTIONS

You can add any veg you like into this soup to really make it your own, that's the beauty of it! For example, try chucking in some diced swede or red peppers to change up the flavour profiles. I like it as it is, dunked with the ends of a crusty loaf loaded with salted butter, especially when I'm feeling under the weather.



SPICED BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

Did you know that butternut squash is known as butternut pumpkin in Australia and New Zealand? I mean, to be honest ... neither did I, but I literally just Googled 'butternut squash facts' as I was struggling with what to write here. Bear with me – I have just written over 90 intros, trying to sound interesting. This soup speaks for itself – well, the poor thing has to as I'm so bad at selling it. Simple, classic, delicious.

Serves 4

| 4 hours on high / 6 hours on low / + 20 minutes in the oven to start

1 large butternut squash or 1 medium pumpkin, peeled, deseeded and cut into 2cm dice

1 large onion, cut into 3cm chunks

3 garlic cloves, grated

thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and grated

1 lemongrass stick, bruised

1 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped

1 tablespoon red Thai curry paste

1½ teaspoons Chinese five spice

400ml full-fat coconut milk

80g butter, diced

soy sauce, to taste

coriander leaves, to garnish

1. Heat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan. Throw the squash or pumpkin and onion pieces into a roasting tin and roast for 20 minutes, until they start to soften and get some colour. (You can do this in an air fryer, if you have one – 10–15 minutes at 200°C.)
2. Throw the roasted squash and onion, along with the garlic, ginger, lemongrass and chilli, into the bowl of your slow cooker and add the curry paste, five spice and coconut milk. Half fill the coconut milk can with water and pour that in, too. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 6 hours, until the squash is tender.
3. When the soup is cooked, scoop out the lemongrass stick, and give the soup a good blend with a hand-held stick blender; if you don't want the soup completely blitzed, remove some of the butternut squash and set it aside to use to top the soup before serving. Add the butter and blitz again. Taste, season with soy sauce and serve topped with chopped coriander and any reserved butternut squash.

MY SUGGESTIONS

This is delish finished with a crunchy peanut brittle. In a small pan, heat 30g of caster sugar with 2 tablespoons of water, ½ teaspoon of hot chilli powder and ½ teaspoon of Chinese five spice over a medium heat. Let it come to a boil and reduce a little, then throw in 3 tablespoons of salted peanuts and stir to coat. Spread them into a single layer on a baking tray lined with baking paper, and place the tray in an oven at 180°C/160°C fan for 10–15 minutes, until crunchy. Remove from the oven and leave to cool and harden (don't touch them until they're cooled!).



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CHICKEN.

THAI RED CURRY

Thai food is quickly becoming one of the most popular cuisines across the UK. There's something so light yet delicious about a Thai red curry, and thankfully this dish in the slow cooker hits all the right spots – and the aromas you'll have wafting through your house as it cooks make it all-the-more yummy. Who needs scented candles?

Serves 4

3 hours on high / 6-7 hours on low

6 skinless, boneless chicken thighs

1 red onion, sliced

250g closed-cup mushrooms, halved

1 lemongrass stick, bruised

2 red chillies, split lengthways, plus extra to serve

thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and grated julienned

handful of fresh makrut lime leaves

400ml full-fat coconut milk

3 tablespoons Thai red curry paste

1 tablespoon dark soy sauce, plus extra if needed

1 teaspoon fish sauce, plus extra if needed

1 teaspoon white sugar, plus extra if needed

1 chicken stock cube

25g Thai basil, leaves picked, plus extra to serve

1 tablespoon cornflour, slackened with water (optional)

salt

2 limes, halved, to serve

1. Tip the chicken into the bowl of your slow cooker and season it generously with salt. Add the onion, mushrooms, lemongrass, chillies, ginger, lime leaves, coconut milk, curry paste, soy sauce, fish sauce and sugar, and crumble in the stock cube. Stir to combine, then put the lid on and cook on high for 3 hours or on low for 6–7 hours, until the chicken is completely tender.
2. Once the curry is ready, stir in the Thai basil leaves, and the cornflour slurry (if using), gently breaking up any larger pieces of chicken as you go. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust using the soy sauce, fish sauce and sugar, as needed to balance the flavour – you should have a balance of salty, sweet and sharp.
3. Divide the curry between four bowls (scoop out the lemongrass stick) and serve each with half a lime for squeezing, some thinly sliced red chilli and a few Thai basil leaves scattered over.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Serve with some jasmine rice to soak up all of those delicious saucy flavours and some spicy Thai crackers to scoop it all up. To make the most fragrant jasmine rice, cook it according to the packet instructions, but add a bashed stick of lemongrass and a makrut lime leaf to the cooking water.



COQ AU VIN

If you've followed me for a while, you'll know I'm partial to a slip-up with words like this (please don't Google 'Poppy O'Toole whim'). So as much as this classic French dish can be a bit of a ... mouthful ... it's equally a properly hearty and tasty meal to enjoy for your dinner.

This is one for a fancy date night or a dinner party to sound posh in front of your friends or family. Or as it's just throwing it all in to the slow cooker, you could even whap it out midweek on a ... whim.

Serves 4

| 3 hours on high / 6-7 hours on low

6 skinless, boneless chicken thighs

250g shallots, thinly sliced

4 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

300g chestnut mushrooms, halved

small handful of thyme, leaves picked

200g diced pancetta or chopped smoked streaky bacon

200ml dry white wine

good knob of butter, cubed

1 chicken stock cube, crumbled

100ml double cream

30g flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped

1 tablespoon cornflour, slackened with water (optional)
salt and black pepper

1. Season the chicken generously with salt, then add the chicken, shallots, garlic, mushrooms, thyme, pancetta or bacon, wine, butter, stock cube, 1 teaspoon of salt and tonnes of black pepper to the bowl of your slow cooker. Put the lid on and cook on high for 3 hours or on low for 6–7 hours, until the chicken is completely tender.
2. Stir in the cream, parsley and cornflour slurry (if using), gently breaking up any larger pieces of chicken as you go. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed. Spoon the coq au vin on to plates to serve.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Serve this up with my ultimate buttery mashed potatoes (see [here](#) or [here](#) for my slow-cooker mash) or you can go the extra mile and chef up a dauphinoise potato for the side: put 300ml of double cream, 2 garlic cloves, thyme and rosemary sprigs in a pan with salt and pepper. Heat it gently and let it infuse, then thinly slice 4–5 large Maris Piper potatoes as fine as you can (use a mandoline, if you have one) and layer them up in your dish. Season between each layer, pouring over a bit of your warm, infused cream each time, then pour the remaining cream over the top. Bake for 50 minutes at 170°C/150°C fan, until golden and cooked through. (For my slow cooker dauphinoise, see [here](#).)



TERIYAKI CHICKEN

Teriyaki combines all the delicious notes of Japanese cuisine to make a sticky, tacky, sharp-yet-sweet sauce for your chicken. It goes perfectly with the mushrooms in this dish, making for a lovely dinner and a change to your everyday chicken-and-veg. Serve it with some rice and Bob's your uncle, Fanny's your aunt.

Serves 4

3 hours on high / 6-7 hours on low

6 skinless, boneless chicken thighs

300g shiitake mushrooms, halved if large

150g spring onions, sliced into 3cm pieces, plus extra to serve

4 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and grated

6 tablespoons teriyaki sauce

1 chicken stock cube dissolved in 200ml boiling water

splash of sesame oil

180-200g sugar snap peas or mangetout (optional)

1 tablespoon cornflour, slackened with water (optional)

salt

1. Season the chicken generously with salt. Add the chicken, mushrooms, spring onions, garlic, ginger, teriyaki sauce, chicken stock and sesame oil to the bowl of your slow cooker and stir

everything together. Put the lid on and cook on high for 3 hours or on low for 6–7 hours, until the chicken is completely tender.

2. When you have about 30 minutes left on your cooking time, throw in the sugar-snap peas or mangetout (if using), for extra ‘health’.
3. Once the chicken is ready, stir in cornflour slurry (if using), gently breaking up any larger pieces of chicken as you go. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Serve with sticky rice, flat-rice noodles, pak choi, green beans, fresh chilli slices, finely sliced spring onion, toasted sesame seeds or your favourite crispy chilli oil.

It’s a rogue one, but if you’ve ever been to a certain fast-food sandwich chain, you can have a delicious teriyaki chicken melt – and that is exactly what I would recommend doing with any leftovers from this recipe. Simply add some of your teriyaki chicken to a nice, soft bread roll, whack on a few slices of cheese and chuck it under the grill until it’s bubbling. Add whatever salad you would usually choose from that big salad bar.



HONEY GARLIC CHICKEN THIGHS

Is there anything more beautiful than the meeting of honey and garlic? I will never get enough of this dish. EVER. Top-tier dinner every time. I shouldn't have favourites from this cookbook, but I kinda do...

This is possibly one of the simplest chicken recipes you can make. It only uses six ingredients (with two of them being salt and pepper).

Serves 4

3 hours on high / 6 hours on low

8 skinless, boneless chicken thighs

1 garlic bulb, cloves peeled and minced

5 tablespoons runny honey

2 tablespoons dark soy sauce

salt and black pepper

1. Season the chicken with salt and pepper. Place a large frying pan over a medium-high heat and, when hot, add the seasoned thighs. Sear them, turning, until golden all over.
2. Tip the thighs into the bowl of your slow cooker along with all the remaining ingredients. Put the lid on and cook on high for 3 hours or on low for 6 hours.

3. When cooked, remove the thighs from the slow cooker and pour the sauce into a small saucepan. Place it over a high heat and let it boil until it's reduced by half. Pour it over the thighs and enjoy.

MY SUGGESTIONS

These are perfect to chop up and chuck on top of a stir-fry or fried rice, or they are great for making ahead so you have them ready for lunch when you need them.

As a lighter side, very finely shred $\frac{1}{4}$ red cabbage, 1 carrot, $\frac{1}{2}$ red onion and season with salt and pepper, then squeeze in the juice of a lemon and add a sprinkle of chilli flakes with some chopped coriander. Health, right there.

FAJITA CHICKEN

Fajitas have always been an absolute staple in my house. They're a winner: everyone enjoys them, you can't really go wrong with them and then you have all the fun of assembling as you please. Make them even easier by just chucking all the ingredients in the slow cooker and let those Mexican spices work their magic.

Serves 4

3 hours on high / 6-7 hours on low

6 skinless, boneless chicken thighs
2 red peppers, deseeded and sliced
1 red onion, sliced
2 garlic cloves, grated or crushed
handful of thyme sprigs, leaves picked
1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
½ teaspoon ground cumin
2 teaspoons garlic granules
2 teaspoons onion powder
½-1 tablespoon chilli sauce
1-2 limes, juiced, to taste
salt and black pepper

1. Add the chicken, peppers, onion, garlic, thyme, cayenne, paprika, cumin, garlic granules, onion powder and chilli sauce, with a pinch of salt and some black pepper to the bowl of your slow cooker. Put the lid on and cook on high for 3 hours or on low for 6–7 hours, until the chicken is completely tender.
2. Stir in the lime juice, then taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed. Remove the chicken from the slow cooker and slice it before serving – it will be tender, so may collapse a bit as you do, but that's completely fine.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Serve this up as part of a Mexican feast: nachos, tortilla chips, pico de gallo, guac (see [here](#)), soured cream and the fajita filling in the middle for everyone to have fun making their own creations. For a speedy pico de gallo, chuck 3 chopped plum tomatoes, a small handful of chopped coriander (stalks and all), ½ finely chopped red onion, 1-2 deseeded and finely chopped green chillies (to taste), the juice of a lime, a big pinch of flaky sea salt and a pinch of sugar into a bowl. Mix, season with black pepper and give it a taste.

Is it even British fajitas unless it has half a bag of grated cheddar on top? I don't think so...



HUNTER'S CHICKEN

Roll me into a ball and drench me in melted cheese and BBQ sauce, because I'd happily live out the rest of my days as a sticky, sweet and salty mess of hunter's chick. And no, this isn't the bang-average hunter's chicken you get down at the local 2-for-1 pub. We're talking gastro quality, baaaaby. Let me tell you, there is nothing more succulent than a slow-cooker chicken breast. Make this a new weeknight staple and delight the whole fam. This dish is dedicated to my godson Hunter, so it is officially my second favourite thing in this world called Hunter.

Serves 4

| 2½-3 hours on high / 6-7 hours on low

8 rashers of streaky bacon

4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts

200g tomato ketchup

100ml red wine vinegar or cider vinegar

100g light brown soft sugar

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

2 tablespoons runny honey

1 heaped teaspoon smoked paprika

1 teaspoon garlic granules

1 teaspoon onion salt

150g cheddar, grated
salt and black pepper

1. Wrap two rashers of streaky bacon around each chicken breast. Season with salt and pepper and place the wrapped breasts in the bowl of your slow cooker.
2. In a bowl, mix the ketchup, vinegar, sugar, Worcestershire sauce, honey, paprika, garlic granules and onion salt with a seasoning of black pepper, until well combined.
3. Pour the sauce over the bacon-wrapped chicken. Put the lid on the slow cooker and cook on high for 2½–3 hours or on low for 6–7 hours. Once the chicken has fully cooked through, remove it from the slow cooker and place it in a baking dish.
4. Pour the remaining sauce from the slow cooker into a saucepan and simmer over a medium–high heat for about 5 minutes to thicken. Meanwhile, preheat the grill to high.
5. Pour the thickened sauce over the chicken and sprinkle over the cheddar. Place the dish under the hot grill for a few minutes, until the cheese is melted and golden.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Cook up some chips to serve with your hunter's chicken, so you can swipe up that sauce. Then, have a buttery, delicious corn-on-the-cob on the side. If you know me, you know I love an air fryer, so toss your corn in a bowl with olive oil and get into the air fryer at 200°C for 20 minutes, turning half way (if you don't have an air fryer, you can bake it in the oven for a bit longer at the same temperature, or griddle it on the hob

over a high heat). Season generously with salt and pepper and a knob of butter.



'MARRY ME' CHICKEN

This dish is so good it's meant to make people want to marry you after they've eaten it. I mean, I am 14 years deep into a relationship and even this chicken hasn't got a ring on my finger, so I need a refund. Maybe I should rename it 'Still Won't Marry Me' Chicken. Then again, I cooked it for myself rather than the engagement anyway.

Quick update: got engaged while writing this book, so maybe this recipe works after all!

Serves 4

2-3 hours on high / 6-7 hours on low

3 skinless, boneless chicken breasts

2 tablespoons tomato purée

300ml double cream

½ garlic bulb, cloves peeled and crushed

100g sun-dried tomatoes in oil, drained (oil reserved) and chopped

100ml dry white wine

100g parmesan, grated

½ lemon, juiced

small handful of flat-leaf parsley, chopped

salt and black pepper

1. Season your chicken breasts well with salt and pepper. Add the chicken to the bowl of your slow cooker along with your tomato purée, double cream, garlic, sun-dried tomatoes with 1 tablespoon of their oil, wine and parmesan. Mix well, put the lid on and cook on high for 2–3 hours or on low for 6–7 hours.
2. Once the chicken is cooked and tender, season up with the lemon juice and parsley and serve the chicken breasts whole with the sauce, or pull them apart with a pair of tongs or two forks and mix together.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Of course, I would serve this up with crispy, crunchy little garlicky potato cubes or some roasted new potatoes with butter and chopped fresh parsley. To make some crunchy potato cubes, get 3 Maris Pipers and cut them into small cubes, then par boil them in salted water until knife-tender. Meanwhile, get a tray of vegetable oil into the oven at 200°C/180°C fan to heat up. Once the potatoes are ready, drain them and leave them to steam for a few minutes. Then, get them into the hot oil to roast for 20 minutes, before adding in some minced cloves of garlic and cooking for another 5–10 minutes. Season and serve. Or, do this in your air fryer at 180°C for 20 minutes, then increase the heat to 190°C and fry for another 5 minutes with the garlic.

Make sure to top everything with plenty more parmesan.



CHICKEN AND CHORIZO ORZO

Orzo sounds a bit boujee, doesn't it? In reality it's just a very little pasta shape, a bit like if a grain of rice had a love child with your macaroni. Now, instead of taking too much time imagining that sweet, carby love-making, get this beautiful dish in your slow cooker instead.

Serves 4

3 hours on high / 6 hours on low / + 30–40 minutes on high or 1 hour on low to cook the pasta

6 skinless, boneless chicken thighs

150g cooking chorizo, skin removed and roughly chopped

2 tablespoons tomato purée

300ml hot chicken stock

100ml double cream

2 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

250g orzo pasta

2 large handfuls of baby spinach

handful of flat-leaf parsley, leaves chopped

squeeze of lemon juice

salt and black pepper

1. Add the chicken, chorizo, tomato purée, chicken stock, double cream and garlic, with a good seasoning of salt and pepper, to the

bowl of your slow cooker. Mix well, put the lid on and cook on high for 3 hours or on low for 6 hours.

2. Add your orzo to the bowl and cook for a further 30–40 minutes on high or 1 hour on low, until the pasta is tender.
3. Mix well and add your spinach, parsley and lemon juice. Taste, season accordingly and serve.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Dice up some extra chorizo and fry until crispy to give a side serving with a final smoky kick. You can add in some chilli flakes if you want things a bit spicy.

Try this recipe with prawns instead of chicken – cook the whole mixture (without the prawns) for about 3 hours on low or 1½ hours on high, adding in some peeled raw prawns to cook through about 30–45 minutes before the end of the cooking time, until fully cooked through.



BUFFALO CHICKEN

After spending a bit of time in the USA, I've taken on the role of honorary American purely so I can share this tender, spicy and tangy buffalo chicken. I'm still hoping I'll do a Cat Deeley and crack America, so this should be a good start.

Serves 4

4 hours on high / 7-8 hours on low

3 skinless, boneless chicken breasts

1 x 148ml bottle of Frank's Hot Sauce

1 teaspoon onion salt

1 teaspoon garlic granules

1 tablespoon light brown soft sugar

1. Get everything into the bowl of your slow cooker and mix it together well. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 7-8 hours.
2. Once the chicken is cooked, use a pair of kitchen tongs or two forks to pull it apart, then serve as you like.

MY SUGGESTIONS

What's really great about this recipe is how versatile it is. Get creative and slap it in a brioche roll with a dollop of coleslaw, use it as a pizza or

nacho topping, stick it in a wrap or even add some cream cheese to turn it into the world's most moreish dip.

I think this is the ultimate match-day chicken – scoop out some baked potatoes and fill the skins with the shredded buffalo chicken and top with plenty of cheese, get it melty and drizzle over some blue cheese sauce for a half-time snack. (To make an easy baked potato in the air fryer, pierce the potato with a fork, rub it with oil and salt and get in the microwave for 10 minutes. Then throw it into the air fryer at 170°C for 25 minutes. Alternatively, microwave then bake in the oven at 200°C/180°C fan for 40–45 minutes.)

This recipe is also great for topping fries, and of course making big, sexy, cheesy toasties. For the toasties, get some slices of thick white bread, spread with mayo on all sides, get it into a frying pan on a medium heat, add a dollop of your buffalo chicken and some cheese of your choice (I personally like burger cheese on this, but you do you, bab). Add the other slice of bread on top and cook on both sides until golden and crispy.



PARMESAN POTATOES AND CHICKEN

Of course, there had to be potatoes in here. These parmesan spuds sing as loudly as the chicken – so much so I had to actually call it Parmesan Potatoes and Chicken rather than Parmesan Chicken and Potatoes. Who cares about the rulebook?

Serves 4

4 hours on high / 6–8 hours on low

750g baby potatoes

3 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

1 tablespoon dried Italian herbs

1 tablespoon lemon zest

1 tablespoon smoked paprika

150g parmesan, grated

4–6 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs

200ml chicken stock

75ml double cream

2 tablespoons olive oil, plus optional extra if you want to fry

salt and black pepper

1. Add the potatoes, garlic, herbs, lemon zest and smoked paprika to the bowl of your slow cooker and season well with salt and pepper. Sprinkle over half the parmesan and then put the chicken thighs on top of the potatoes.

2. Pour in the chicken stock and double cream around the chicken and potatoes (rather than over the top) – it shouldn't submerge the chicken thighs. Drizzle over the olive oil, put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 6–8 hours, until the potatoes are tender and the chicken is cooked.
3. Heat the grill to high. If you have an oven-safe slow-cooker bowl, sprinkle over the remaining parmesan and grill the contents of the bowl for about 5–10 minutes, until the chicken skin is golden. Alternatively, you can remove each chicken thigh and fry it skin side down in a frying pan over a medium heat pan in a little olive oil, until golden. Then serve up (sprinkled with the remaining parmesan, if you used a frying pan) and enjoy.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Make it your own! Crumble over some feta, add a jar of drained and chopped sun-dried tomatoes, some wholegrain mustard ... the choice is yours!

Serve with peas tossed with some chopped mint leaves and some very finely diced shallot, seasoned with salt and pepper for a bit of summery freshness.



CHICKEN TIKKA MASALA

My favourite curry of all time. Get me one of these, a garlic naan, a plate of chips (of course) and some mushroom pilau rice, and I'm a very happy gal. Pour me a pint of Cobra beer while you're at it, would ya bab? Glasgow – we are forever indebted for this beauty and I'll never forget that again.

Serves 4

4–5 hours on high / 6–7 hours on low / + marinating / + 15 minutes on high

6–8 skinless, boneless chicken thighs

3 tablespoons tikka masala curry paste

3 garlic cloves, crushed

thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and finely chopped

1 tablespoon ghee or butter

1 onion, finely chopped

2 tablespoons tomato purée

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar

½ tablespoon light brown soft sugar

1 tablespoon desiccated coconut

1 tablespoon ground almonds

1 cinnamon stick or pinch of ground cinnamon

5 cardamom pods

300ml passata

100ml coconut cream

½ teaspoon garam masala

squeeze of lemon juice

salt and black pepper

1. Add the chicken, curry paste, garlic and ginger to a mixing bowl, stir to combine and coat the chicken. Cover the bowl and leave the chicken to marinate in the fridge for at least 3 hours, or ideally overnight.
2. When you're ready to cook, tip everything from the bowl into your slow cooker, along with all the remaining ingredients. Mix and season well with salt and pepper. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4–5 hours or on low for 6–7 hours, until the chicken is cooked through and tender.
3. Remove the chicken from the sauce and set aside. Blitz the sauce in the slow-cooker bowl with a hand-held stick blender until smooth and thick. Taste the sauce and add more seasoning, if needed. Then, return the chicken to the bowl and cook for another 15 minutes on high to get the curry nice and piping hot before serving.

MY SUGGESTIONS

If you like it spicy, chuck ½ tablespoon of chilli powder into the chicken marinade.

You could swap out the chicken breasts for large chunks of cod or hake, just cook for 3 hours on high or 5 hours on low until the fish is cooked through. Chicken or fish, dish up with some coriander rice, yoghurt and

a naan, paratha or chapati to dunk. A simple onion, tomato and cucumber salad is good, too.

You can make any leftovers into a delicious pasty – cut rectangles of shop-bought shortcrust pastry and put a large dollop of the leftover curry in the middle, then egg wash the edges and seal with another piece of pastry over the top. Use a fork to seal the edges, give a final egg wash and sprinkle with nigella seeds, then bake according to the pastry packet instructions.



CHICKEN KORMA

I don't know if it was the same for anyone else, but when it was time to put on your big-kid pants and have your first curry at your local Indian restaurant, it was always a korma. It is a lovely, creamy curry that cooks beautifully in your slow cooker.

Serves 4

3-4 hours on high / 6-8 hours on low / + marinating / + 15-20 minutes on high to reduce

3 skinless, boneless chicken breasts, cut into large chunks

3 garlic cloves, crushed

thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and finely grated or chopped

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

½ teaspoon garam masala

1 teaspoon ground coriander

½ teaspoon mild chilli powder

1 tablespoon ghee or butter

1 tablespoon tomato purée

2 teaspoons white sugar

150ml chicken stock, plus extra if needed

100ml double cream, plus extra if needed

4 tablespoons ground almonds

salt and black pepper

1. Add the chicken, garlic, ginger, cumin, paprika, turmeric, garam masala, coriander and chilli powder to a mixing bowl. Season with salt and pepper, then mix well to coat the chicken. Cover the bowl and leave the chicken to marinate in the fridge for at least 3 hours, or ideally overnight.
2. When you're ready to cook, add the marinated chicken and remaining ingredients to the bowl of your slow cooker and mix well. Put the lid on and cook on high for 3–4 hours or on low for 6–8 hours, until the chicken is cooked and tender.
3. Remove the cooked chicken from the sauce and set it aside. Using a hand-held stick blender, blitz your korma sauce until smooth. Adjust the thickness with more cream or stock if you need to.
4. Add the chicken back to the slow cooker, leave the lid off, and get it on high for another 15–20 minutes to reduce and get the curry nice and piping hot before serving.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Serve with rice, chips or even on a jacket potato; or for a more traditional serving, serve with coriander rice, and some naan bread for dunking.

An onion bhaji would not go amiss here, so slice up 2 red onions and put them in a bowl. Grate in 2 garlic cloves and add 1 teaspoon of ginger and garlic paste, 1 teaspoon of vegetable oil, 1 teaspoon of chilli flakes, 1 teaspoon of ground turmeric, 1 teaspoon of mild curry powder, 1 tablespoon of plain flour, 3 tablespoons of gram flour and a large handful of coriander, chopped with the stems and all. Mix together, adding

enough cold water to bind it into a paste. Shallow fry ping-pong-sized balls of the mixture until golden all over and cooked through.



CHICKEN PESTO PASTA

This has to be the ultimate crowd-pleaser – it's got chicken, it's got cheese and it's got that 'wham, bam, thank you ma'am' that will get you wanting to make this for dinner more than just one week. Also, plot twist ... I actually use my slow cooker in summer, too. That's right, your slow cooker doesn't need to gather dust during the warmer months. Let's be controversial and use it year-round.

Serves 4

| 2-3 hours on high / 6-7 hours on low / + 40 minutes-1 hour on high to cook the pasta

2 skinless, boneless chicken breasts

100ml dry white wine (or use chicken stock)

100g parmesan, grated, and the parmesan rind if you have it, plus extra to finish

70g pine nuts, toasted

1 x 200g ball of mozzarella, torn into pieces

3 garlic cloves, minced

2 tablespoons full-fat cream cheese

100g basil, plus extra leaves to serve

squeeze of lemon juice

500ml hot chicken stock

300g rigatoni pasta

handful of cherry tomatoes, halved

3 tablespoons olive oil
salt and black pepper

1. Season the chicken breasts with salt and pepper. Add them to the bowl of your slow cooker with the wine (or stock), parmesan (including the rind, if using), pine nuts, mozzarella, garlic and cream cheese. Season well again, put the lid on and cook on high for 2–3 hours or on low for 6–7 hours. Once the chicken is cooked, remove it from the slow cooker.
2. Add the basil, lemon juice and hot chicken stock to the slow cooker and blitz using a hand-held stick blender.
3. Add your pasta, stir, then place the lid back on and cook on high for 40 minutes–1 hour, until the pasta is tender. In that time, using a pair of kitchen tongs or a couple of forks, pull apart the chicken breasts to shred them.
4. When the pasta is cooked, add the chicken back into the slow cooker, toss in your cherry tomatoes, drizzle in your olive oil, and add another little sprinkle of grated parmesan. Serve straight away.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Dress some rocket leaves with olive oil, salt and pepper and some shavings of parmesan. Put a big handful of the salad on top of the pasta for a bit of freshness.

You could use shop-bought pesto, which you just add at the start of the cooking process, or even change it up and use a red, tomato-based pesto, which would work really well.

As I'm a fiend for carbs, a bit of garlic bread will always end up on my plate when I make pasta. The best garlic bread is made in the air fryer, using a baguette. Get 150g softened butter, 6 crushed garlic cloves and a small handful of chopped flat-leaf parsley and mix. Cut slices across your baguette, all the way along the length, but not right through (you want it intact at the bottom). Slather the crevices with your buttery mixture. Wrap in foil and air fry for 15 minutes 200°C (or get it into the oven for 20-25 minutes at the same temperature).



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BEEF.

BEEF BOURGUIGNON

Now we're getting fancy! Picture it now ... a beef bourguignon on the slow cooker. Red wine in the glass. Barry White on the Alexa. A rose between your teeth. Okay maybe a bit too far. And if I'm being honest, there's probably better food to get you in the mood than this hearty beef and moist carrot stew, because after a bowl or two of this you'll be needing at least a three-hour nap. But whatever floats your boat.

Serves 4

| 5 hours on high

800g beef shin, diced

200g pancetta

250g shallots, finely diced

2 celery sticks, finely diced

300g chestnut mushrooms, halved

2 carrots, thickly sliced

small handful of thyme, leaves picked

2 rosemary sprigs, leaves picked

2 bay leaves

250ml red wine (I like Malbec)

250ml beef stock

30g butter, cubed (optional)

splash of olive oil

1 tablespoon cornflour, slackened with water

salt and black pepper

flat-leaf parsley leaves, to serve (optional)

1. Season the beef generously with salt and let it come up to room temperature. Then, tip it into the bowl of your slow cooker.
2. Add all the remaining ingredients, with the exception of the cornflour, along with 1 teaspoon of salt and lots of black pepper. Put the lid on and cook on high for 5 hours, until the beef is completely tender and shreds easily with a fork. Stir through the cornflour slurry, and scatter with a few flat-leaf parsley leaves to serve, if you like.

MY SUGGESTIONS

If you like mustard, whack a good spoonful of Dijon into the mixture before you start the cooking, just to give the stew a bit of extra oomph.

Classically, this would be served with mashed potatoes (see [here](#) or [here](#) for my slow-cooker mash), but if you want just a bowl of beefy goodness then make sure you have plenty of crusty bread on the side to swipe round the bowl.



BEEF RENDANG

I first had a rendang at a Brick Lane food market when I was about 17 on a day trip to London. I still think of it to this day. An Indonesian beef dish, it needs to be added to your roster of everyday dinners. If I'm still thinking of it 13 years later, it's worth it.

Serves 4

| 5 hours on high / 8-10 hours on low

800g beef shin, diced

1 red onion, finely diced

1 lemongrass stick, bruised

400ml full-fat coconut milk

2 long green chillies, split lengthways, plus extra to serve

1 beef or chicken stock cube, dissolved in 200ml boiling water

2-3 tablespoons rendang paste (depending on how spicy you like it)

1 tablespoon tamarind paste

1 tablespoon coconut or dark brown soft sugar

1 cinnamon stick

1 star anise

2 cardamom pods, bashed with the back of a knife

3 cloves

50g desiccated coconut

1 tablespoon cornflour, slackened with water

salt and black pepper

1. Season the beef generously with salt and let it come to room temperature. Then, add it to the bowl of your slow cooker. Add the remaining ingredients except the desiccated coconut and cornflour, along with 1 teaspoon each of salt and pepper, then stir to combine. Put the lid on and cook on high for 5 hours or on low for 8–10 hours, until the beef is completely tender and shreds easily with a fork.
2. Stir in the desiccated coconut and cornflour slurry, and taste to check the seasoning, adjusting as needed.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Perfect served with rice, coriander and wedges of lime on the side for squeezing.

If you're feeling really fancy you can make your own rendang paste: use 2 deseeded red chillies, 1 peeled shallot, 1 thumb-sized, peeled piece of ginger (or galangal, if you can get it), 2 peeled garlic cloves, 1 bruised lemongrass stick, 2 makrut lime leaves, 1 tablespoon of cumin seeds and 1 tablespoon of coriander seeds. Blend them together to a coarse paste. The paste will keep in the fridge for about a week in a sealed container, or you can freeze it.



BEEF STEW

The classic. You think of slow-cooker dinners and you probably think of beef stew. It's the quintessential slow-cooker dish as you just throw it all in and let those meaty juices do all the hard work.

Serves 4

| 5 hours on high

800g beef short rib, diced

200g smoked bacon lardons or diced pancetta

2 celery sticks, cut into 2–3cm pieces

2 carrots, cut into 2–3cm dice

6 shallots, peeled, large ones halved lengthways

2 bay leaves

small handful of thyme, leaves picked

2 rosemary sprigs, leaves picked

4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

1–2 tablespoons tomato purée

500ml beef stock

500ml ale

1–2 teaspoons Dijon or wholegrain mustard, to taste

8 waxy potatoes, cut into 2–3cm dice

1 tablespoon cornflour, slackened with water (optional)

salt and black pepper

1. First, season the beef generously with salt and let it come up to room temperature. You can do this up to a day in advance, if you remember.
2. Next, add the beef, lardons or pancetta, celery, carrots, shallots, bay leaves, thyme, rosemary, garlic, tomato purée, stock, ale, mustard, 1 teaspoon of salt and lots of black pepper to the bowl of your slow cooker. Put the lid on and cook on high for 5 hours, until the beef is super tender, adding the potatoes after the first hour. You can add the potatoes at the beginning if you need to, but I find they are best after 4 hours. Stir in the cornflour slurry (if using) and season to taste with salt and pepper, adding more mustard as needed.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Serve this with crusty bread or your choice of steamed green veg and potatoes.

If you don't fancy adding alcohol to your stew, then just make up the amount of liquid with some more beef stock and maybe a good spoonful of yeast extract – ale adds a yeasty, dark richness.

BEEF TACOS

This is a sign from a higher power to forget about Taco Tuesdays and just make them any night ya fancy. I won't tell... You can even upload a photo of it with #TacoTuesday on a Thursday. Who cares when they taste this good? Get stuck in and enjoy. I mean, if you're not getting messy with your meat, is it even worth it?!

Serves 4

| 4-5 hours on high / 8-10 hours on low / + marinating

700g beef shin or braising beef, diced

100g chipotle paste

1 onion, sliced

3 garlic cloves, chopped

2 large tomatoes, quartered

2 thyme sprigs

200ml beef stock

8 small corn tacos, to serve

salt and black pepper

1. In a bowl, mix together the beef and the chipotle paste. Cover the bowl and leave the meat to marinate for 30 minutes out of the fridge.

2. Add the meat and all the remaining ingredients to the bowl of your slow cooker. Season with salt and pepper, then put the lid on and cook on high for 4–5 hours or on low for 8–10 hours, until the beef is cooked through and tender.
3. Drain the sauce into a saucepan and bring it to a boil. Let it bubble away until it has reduced by half.
4. Meanwhile, remove the thyme sprigs from the meat and break up the beef slightly with a pair of kitchen tongs or a fork. Then add the meat back to the sauce in the pan and serve.

MY SUGGESTIONS

You need to have a good guac with tacos: 1 avocado, ½ red onion as finely diced as you can, lime zest and juice, ½ a chopped red chilli, plenty of salt and pepper and some chopped coriander, all mixed up.

Find a delish pico de gallo recipe on the [fajita chicken](#) page, which is also perfect scattered all over the tacos for a bit of a freshen up.



SPAGHETTI BOLOGNESE

This recipe is dedicated to my fiancé, Tom. He would genuinely eat spaghetti bolognese every single day of his life if he could. We have a running joke that he actually makes a better bolognese than me, even though I am a professional chef. Mind you, he's also one of those who throws in Marmite, balsamic vinegar, heaps of sugar, Worcestershire sauce and ketchup and hopes for the best, so I wouldn't want to offend the nation of Italy by including his recipe in this book.

Serves 4

| 5 hours on high / 8-10 hours on low

500g pork mince

500g beef mince

1 large onion, finely diced

2 carrots, finely diced

2 celery sticks, finely diced

3 tablespoons tomato purée

1 x 400g can of chopped tomatoes

200ml red wine (I like Malbec)

200ml beef, chicken or vegetable stock

½ teaspoon white sugar

2 bay leaves

pinch of grated nutmeg (optional)

1 parmesan rind (optional)

splash of olive oil, plus extra to finish

100ml whole milk

300g spaghetti

1 tablespoon cornflour, slackened with water

salt and black pepper

1. Add the pork, beef, onion, carrots, celery, tomato purée, chopped tomatoes, red wine, stock, sugar, bay leaves, nutmeg (if using), parmesan rind (if using), 1 teaspoon of salt, lots of pepper and a splash of olive oil to the bowl of your slow cooker. Put the lid on and cook on high for 5 hours or on low for 8–10 hours, stirring once or twice during the cooking time.
2. When the timer has an hour left, stir in the milk. Then, when there are 25–30 minutes left, add the spaghetti (snapping in half if necessary to get it to fit) and turn up the heat to high, if it's not on high already. By the end of the cooking time, the pasta should be al dente. At which point, remove the parmesan rind, if you've used it, and stir in the cornflour slurry and plenty of olive oil, until you have a glossy, meaty sauce that coats the pasta. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed.

MY SUGGESTIONS

You can't have spag bol without garlic bread: see [here](#) for the best basic garlic bread, but if you fancy something different, and, more importantly, cheese-topped, here's another suggestion: mix together melted butter, smoked paprika, dried mixed herbs, 2–3 grated garlic

cloves, a pinch of garlic granules and salt to taste, then spoon all that over slices of baguette (or even just a regular slice of bread). Top with cheese and air fry for 6–8 minutes at 180°C or bake in the oven at 200°C/180°C fan for 10–12 minutes.

Don't be limited to spaghetti, even though it's there in the title. This bolognese is incredible on jacket potatoes or in a toastie (because everything is better between two slices of tiger bread).



BEEF STROGANOFF

This is my take on a stroganoff – a creamy, mustardy sauce packed with mushrooms and tender chunks of beef. It's everything I strive to be in life: beefy, rich and drop-dead gorgeous. <Insert a joke about being a fun-guy here as well.>

Serves 4

| 2-3 hours on high / 6-7 hours on low

700g braising beef, diced

250g chestnut mushrooms, sliced

4 teaspoons Dijon mustard

4 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce

5 garlic cloves, chopped

1 onion, chopped

2 thyme sprigs

1 teaspoon white sugar

100ml beef stock

100ml double cream

squeeze of lemon juice

150ml soured cream

small handful of flat-leaf parsley, leaves chopped

salt and black pepper

1. Throw the beef, mushrooms, mustard, Worcestershire sauce, garlic, onion, thyme, sugar, stock and double cream into the bowl of your slow cooker, season well with salt and black pepper and then mix it all together so that the meat and mushrooms are coated. Put the lid on and cook on high for 2-3 hours or on low for 6-7 hours, until the meat is cooked through and incredibly tender.
2. Add the squeeze of lemon juice and stir through the soured cream, and the parsley to finish. Serve carefully, as the meat will be sooooo good it will be falling apart.

MY SUGGESTIONS

I always serve my stroganoff with some long-grain rice as is more traditional, but if you'd rather, mashed potatoes are always a fantastic choice with anything saucy, as the potato sucks up all of the juices (see [here](#) or [here](#) for my slow-cooker mash).

If you want to keep this veggie, you can leave out the beef and just load it up with more delicious mixed mushrooms.



CHILLI CON CARNE

Oh, hello. Chilli on nachos – I’m happy. Chilli and rice – I’m happy. Chilli on a jacket potato – I’m very happy. Chilli in a sandwich ... maybe too far, but guess what? I’m still happy. Batch cook this beauty and freeze it for all of the above.

Serves 4

| 5 hours on high / 8-10 hours on low

800g beef brisket, diced

1 onion, thinly sliced

6 fat garlic cloves, grated or crushed

2 red or yellow peppers, deseeded and sliced

1 x 400g can of butter beans, drained

1 x 400g can of red kidney beans, drained

1 x 400g can of plum tomatoes

200ml black coffee

1 beef stock cube, crumbled

3 tablespoons chipotle paste

1 teaspoon chilli flakes

3 tablespoons tomato purée

2 bay leaves

2 teaspoons smoked paprika

1 teaspoon dried oregano

2 teaspoons ground cumin

1 tablespoon dark brown soft sugar

2 squares of 70% dark chocolate (optional)

1 tablespoon cornflour, slackened with water

salt and black pepper

1. Season the beef generously with salt and let it come up to room temperature.
2. Tip the beef into the bowl of your slow cooker, then add all the remaining ingredients (squish the plum tomatoes with your hands as you add them), except the chocolate and cornflour slurry. Season with lots of black pepper and stir to combine. Put the lid on and cook on high for 5 hours or on low for 8–10 hours, until the beef shreds easily with a fork.
3. When the chilli is ready, stir in the chocolate (if using) until melted and stir in the cornflour slurry to thicken. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed.

MY SUGGESTIONS

My favourite way to have chilli is on loaded nachos: just layer up tortilla chips in an ovenproof dish with a big spoonful of chilli, pickled jalapeños, grated cheddar and some salsa. Repeat until you get to the top of the dish and bake at 200°C/180°C fan for 10–15 minutes, until hot, crunchy and bubbling. Whack on some soured cream and dig in.



BEEF JOINT AND GRAVY

Beef and gravy are a match made in heaven. Get this in the slow cooker for next Sunday and you won't be disappointed. My parents would say beef is the number-one roast dinner. I might've gone for chicken but actually this delicious-looking beef is making my mouth seriously water. It's a tie. This beef is melt-in-the-mouth, slow-cooked deliciousness that even your mom's Aunt Barbara will enjoy. Controversially, sometimes I enjoy the beef sandwich the following day more than the roast.

Serves 6-8

| 4-5 hours on high / 8-10 hours on low / + resting

200ml red wine (I like Malbec)

2 carrots, roughly chopped

2 celery sticks, roughly chopped

1 onion, halved

1 garlic bulb, halved horizontally through the middle

2 tablespoons tomato purée

4 thyme sprigs

2 rosemary sprigs

*1 tablespoon cornflour, slackened with water, plus 1 tablespoon for the
gravy (optional)*

1.4kg beef roasting joint

300ml hot beef stock (or enough to cover three-quarters of the beef)
salt and black pepper

1. Add everything but the beef and the stock to the bowl of your slow cooker, season, and mix well.
2. Season the beef joint heavily with salt and pepper, then ideally sear the beef on all sides in a large frying pan over a high heat, until caramelised (this helps to seal in the flavours of the meat, giving it another depth of flavour – but if you don't have time to do this, that's fine, it will still be delicious). Add the seared joint to the bowl of your slow cooker.
3. Pour over your hot beef stock so that it comes three-quarters of the way up the side of the joint. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4–5 hours or on low for 8–10 hours, until the beef is cooked through and tender.
4. Remove the cooked joint from the slow cooker, cover it and leave it to rest for at least 30 minutes before carving.
5. In the meantime, pour the juices in the slow-cooker bowl through a sieve and into a saucepan, using the back of a ladle to push it through to get as much flavour out of those juices as possible.
6. Place the pan over a medium heat and bring the liquid to a boil. Depending on how thick you like your gravy, add another tablespoon of cornflour slurry and mix until well combined and the gravy is thickened to your liking. Once you're happy with your gravy consistency, carve up your soft beef and serve.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Beyond the classic Sunday roast with all the trimmings, one of my favourite ways to serve this is to load the slices into a crusty baguette with some horseradish, mayo, rocket and caramelised onions, and have a big pot of gravy for dunking. In other words, as the ultimate roast-dinner sandwich.



BEEF SHORT RIBS

This is serious comfort food for seriously ‘can’t-be-bothered-to-cook’ kinda people. It’s one of those meals that looks like you spent hours faffing about with it, but, really, you just let the slow cooker do all the hard work instead. Take all the credit for this fall-off-the-bone masterpiece.

Serves 4

| 7 hours on high

1.2kg beef short ribs, separated into ribs

2 onions, thinly sliced

2 carrots, finely diced

1 tablespoon tomato purée

30g anchovies in olive oil (drained weight; reserve the oil)

150ml red wine (I like Malbec)

1 x 400g can of plum tomatoes

200ml whole milk

1 bay leaf

handful of sage leaves

handful of thyme sprigs

salt and black pepper

1. First, generously season the beef with salt, tip it into the bowl of the slow cooker and let it come up to room temperature.
2. Add the onions, carrots, tomato purée, anchovies (including the oil from the can), wine, tomatoes, milk, 1 teaspoon of salt and plenty of black pepper to the bowl. If you're feeling fancy, tie the bay, sage and thyme together with kitchen string and add them to the mixture, or you can pop them straight in and fish out the stems later. Put the lid on and cook on high for 7 hours, until the beef is falling off the bone and shreds easily with a fork. Check after 6 hours, as some ribs may cook more quickly than others.
3. Carefully skim any fat sitting on the surface using a big spoon, then very gently remove the ribs from the pot (they will be very tender). Remove the bones and roughly break apart the meat with two forks. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed.

MY SUGGESTIONS

This is so versatile: you can serve up with whatever you fancy – broken up through pasta, or with some proper creamy mash (see [here](#) or [here](#) for my slow cooker mash) or even just in a bowl by itself with a hunk of crusty baguette. I love it with some really thick pappardelle pasta, as the beef and sauce really cling to the thicker sheets. Green salad, too, for health.

You can also serve up these short ribs on the bone. Very carefully lift the whole short ribs (one by one), bone and all, out of the slow cooker and place them on a baking tray. Then pour the sauce from the slow cooker into a saucepan and bring to a boil. Leave the sauce to boil and reduce until you have a thicker consistency. Get the grill on high. Pour the

thickened sauce all over your short ribs and then get them under the grill so that the sauce caramelises and gets golden and sticky. Serve up with some creamy [dauphinoise potatoes](#) and green beans. The perfect date-night dinner.



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LAMB.

HARISSA LAMB TAGINE

I went on holiday to Morocco in 2019 and stayed in the worst all-inclusive I've ever been to. So bad the cocktails came out of a machine. Shout-out to my friends Jackie and Alex who made up for the bad cocktails and terrible buffet food by bringing a laugh or two. But when we ventured out of the hotel we found the real Morocco and had an incredible, authentic tagine. It was delicious and I've tried to recreate it the best I can here. I'd recommend not serving it with a mojito out of a machine, though.

Serves 4-6

4 hours on high / 6 hours on low

1 tablespoon olive oil

500g lamb neck, cut into 3cm chunks (remove excess fat)

1 onion, roughly chopped

2 carrots, quartered lengthways and chopped

2 teaspoons ground cumin

1 teaspoon sweet paprika

1 teaspoon ground coriander

2 tablespoons spicy harissa paste

1 x 400g can of chopped tomatoes

250ml chicken stock

200g dried apricots, chopped

thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and chopped

2 garlic cloves, crushed

1 x 400g can of chickpeas, drained

1 cinnamon stick

salt and black pepper

handful of coriander, leaves picked, to serve

1. Heat the oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat. Add the lamb and brown the meat, turning regularly, until coloured on all sides. Transfer the meat to the bowl of your slow cooker.
2. Add the onion and carrots to the same frying pan and fry for a few minutes, until the carrots are starting to brown, then transfer the mixture to the slow cooker with your lamb.
3. Add the cumin, paprika, ground coriander and harissa paste, and season with salt and pepper. Then, add the chopped tomatoes, stock, apricots, ginger, garlic, chickpeas and cinnamon stick and stir well. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 6 hours, until the lamb is meltingly tender and all the carrots are soft. Sprinkle with the coriander leaves to serve.

MY SUGGESTIONS

If you don't want a little bit of heat from the harissa, you can swap it out for tomato purée and 1 teaspoon of cumin, ½ teaspoon of smoked paprika, a squeeze of lemon and 1 grated clove of garlic, all mixed together. It's not the same but it's a good alternative!

If you want a tasty little garnish, try making some crispy chickpeas. Preheat your oven to 200°C/180°C fan and line a baking tray with baking

parchment. Drain the chickpeas, tip them on to a clean tea towel and pat them as dry as possible, then drizzle them very lightly with oil. Roast for 40–50 minutes, until dark golden brown and crispy. Mix together 1 teaspoon of smoked paprika, 1 teaspoon of ground cumin, 1 teaspoon of salt and 1 teaspoon of garlic granules and sprinkle the mixture all over, tossing the crispy chickpeas in the spice mixture.



ROAST LAMB WITH POTATOES

Nothing says Easter like roast lamb. Now it's not essential that you follow this up with three-quarters of an Easter egg because in reality, you could cook this any time of the year. Looking at this photo though, I can say that I have let you down. Because that dish should be COVERED in mint sauce. And I mean drowning. But apparently then you wouldn't be able to see how nice the roasted lamb is. So that's fair enough I guess.

Serves 4–6

5 hours on high / 8 hours on low / + 25–30 minutes in the oven

½ bone-in lamb leg (about 1.2kg)

9 garlic cloves, peeled but left whole

3 rosemary sprigs, each cut into thirds

olive oil, for rubbing and drizzling

2 drained, tinned anchovies (optional, but recommended)

1 tablespoon capers (optional, but recommended)

4 King Edward potatoes, peeled and quartered

1 red onion, thinly sliced

3 thyme sprigs

small handful of mint, leaves chopped

salt and black pepper

1. Using a sharp knife, make 9 deep cuts into the lamb leg and add a garlic clove and a third of a rosemary sprig into each one. Rub the joint with olive oil and season it well with salt and pepper.
2. Place everything else except the mint in the bowl of your slow cooker and place the seasoned lamb leg on top. Put the lid on and cook on high for 5 hours or on low for 8 hours, until the lamb is cooked through and the potatoes are tender.
3. Just before the end of the cooking time, get the oven on to 220°C/200°C fan to heat up. Transfer the lamb and potatoes to a roasting tin, drizzle with oil, then place them in the oven for 25–30 minutes, until golden and crispy.
4. Strain the cooking juices that are in the bowl of your slow cooker through a fine sieve and into a jug. Add the chopped fresh mint leaves, stir and serve alongside the carved lamb for pouring over.

MY SUGGESTIONS

This is the perfect Easter Sunday centrepiece, alongside some minted peas and cumin and buttery glazed carrots. Peel the carrots and cut them into batons, then get them in a bowl with 2 tablespoons of melted butter, 1 tablespoon of runny honey or maple syrup and 2 teaspoons of cumin seeds. Sprinkle over some flaky salt and toss everything together, then chuck them in the air fryer at 200°C for 20–25 minutes (or into the oven at the same temperature for 35–40 minutes), until the carrots are tender and caramelised.

Carve any leftover lamb off the bone and chuck it into a crusty roll with maybe a bit more of the mint sauce.



LAMB RAGÙ

I know you love a bolognese, so level it up to even fancier heights with a lamb ragù to knock your socks off. Lamb cooks beautifully when slow cooked, making it tender and delicious and rich and just all kinds of yummy. This and some of that wider, fancier pasta, like pappardelle, and you're in for a right treat.

Serves 4–6

4 hours on high / 7 hours on low

65g diced smoked pancetta

300g lamb shoulder, diced

1 onion, grated

2 carrots, peeled and grated

2 celery sticks, finely chopped

4 garlic cloves, minced

3 rosemary sprigs

1 tablespoon tomato purée

200ml red wine (I like Malbec)

200ml passata

100ml lamb stock

salt and black pepper

To serve

300–450g pappardelle, cooked to packet instructions
grated parmesan

1. Get a frying pan over a medium heat and add the pancetta. Cook it off, so that it releases its fat and turns golden, then add it to the bowl of your slow cooker. Add all the remaining ingredients except the parmesan, and season well with salt and pepper. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 7 hours, until the lamb shoulder is so tender that it's falling apart.
2. If you feel like the sauce needs reducing, transfer everything into a saucepan and cook on medium-high until you have a thicker consistency that's to your liking. Serve the ragù stirred through the cooked pasta and pile high into bowls, generously scattering with parmesan.

MY SUGGESTIONS

This freezes really well! You can make up a big batch and split it down into tubs, then whenever you fancy a quick, tasty dinner it's all ready and all you need to do is to cook a bit of pasta. Make sure there's plenty of parmesan, because obviously that's what makes it.



LAMB SHANKS

Lamb shanks just sound so fancy. It's definitely that dish you pull out of your sleeve when you've got guests coming over that you want to impress. Maybe it's date night? Maybe the in-laws are coming round? Or maybe it's your boss coming over for dinner? Wait... why does that only seem to happen in US sitcoms or movies. Do bosses really ever visit for dinner? Oh well, at least you know you can cook this lamb shank if they ever do.

Serves 2

| 6-7 hours on high / 8-10 hours on low

2 bone-in lamb shanks (each about 200g; you can add more if you have space in your slow cooker)

200ml red wine (I like Malbec)

400ml lamb stock

1 star anise

1 red onion, grated

1 carrot, grated

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 tablespoon tomato purée

1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

salt and black pepper

1. Season each shank heavily with salt and pepper, then get everything into the bowl of your slow cooker and mix well. Put the lid on and cook on high for 6–7 hours or on low for 8–10 hours, until the shanks are so tender that the meat falls off the bone.
2. Remove the shanks from the slow-cooker bowl and set them aside. Pour the cooking juices into a saucepan and remove the star anise. Place the pan over a medium–high heat, bring to a boil and reduce the liquid by at least half, until you have a gravy-like consistency. Pour the sauce over the shanks when you serve.

MY SUGGESTIONS

This is pretty much the ultimate date-night dinner if you're trying to impress. These shanks look like you've slaved away in the kitchen for hours! Make sure you have plenty of ultra-creamy mash to go alongside (see [here](#) or [here](#) for my slow-cooker mash). I like garlicky green beans with my lamb, so get 3 grated garlic cloves and warm them through on the hob with 50g of salted butter – just to take the edge off the raw garlic flavour. Boil your green beans in salted boiling water for 4–6 minutes, until tender, then get them into the pan with the buttery garlic and toss them with some flaky salt and black pepper.



SHEPHERD'S PIE

Here's a debate for you ... shepherd's pie vs cottage pie. There's only one way to find out – FIGHT! I'll stay impartial as they're both covered in mash so I'm very happy either way.

Serves 4

4 hours on high / + 10-15 minutes in the oven or grill

For the filling

750g lamb mince

1 onion, finely diced

2 carrots, scrubbed and finely diced

2 celery sticks, finely diced

4 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

1 rosemary sprig, leaves picked

300ml lamb stock

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce, plus extra to taste

30g butter, cubed (optional)

splash of olive oil

1 tablespoon cornflour, slackened with water (optional)

salt and black pepper

For the topping

700g Maris Piper potatoes, peeled and cut into 2cm slices

50g butter, cubed

100ml whole milk

1. Add the lamb, onion, carrots, celery, garlic, rosemary, stock, Worcestershire sauce, butter (if using), olive oil, 1 teaspoon of salt and lots of pepper to the bowl of your slow cooker and stir everything together. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours, until the lamb is tender.
2. While the filling is cooking, make the topping. Add the potatoes to a pan of salted water. Bring to a boil and cook for 15–20 minutes, until completely tender, then drain well and mash until smooth. Beat in the butter and milk and season to taste with salt.
3. Once the filling is ready, stir in the cornflour (if using) and season to taste with salt and pepper, adding more Worcestershire sauce too, if you like.
4. If you're eating this now, preheat the grill or oven to high and spoon the mash over the top of the filling (in the slow-cooker bowl if it's ovenproof, otherwise transfer the filling to an ovenproof dish). Grill or bake for 10–15 minutes, until the mash is crisp and golden.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Dish this up in big bowls with some buttery peas on the side and maybe even some roasted carrots, if you're feeling fancy. There's a classic French dish with peas called *petits pois à la française*, which is basically peas, bacon lardons, chicken stock and wilted lettuce. I know, hot lettuce doesn't sound great – but, believe me, the French know what's

going on. Gently fry off a 70g pack of smoked bacon lardons in 1 tablespoon of butter in a large frying pan. Slice up 2 banana shallots into thin slices and when the bacon starts to brown, add in the shallots. When the shallots have softened, add in 200g of frozen petits pois and 100ml of chicken stock. Cover with a lid and leave to simmer for about 10 minutes, until nearly all of the liquid has been absorbed. Season well with salt and pepper and zest over half a lemon. Chop 4–5 romaine lettuce leaves into strips and chuck them in, then cover with the lid again and give the lettuce 2–3 minutes to wilt down. Toss it all together and serve up.



GRANDMA PAT'S ROLLED LAMB BREAST

Now here we are, the person who this book is dedicated to. My lovely Grandma Pat who sadly left us in 2023. She loved playing cards, feeding the dogs rich tea biscuits, eating midnight bacon sandwiches, having a whiskey and lemonade or two (even though she 'never usually drank') and, back in the day, she loved serving up a feast. Rolled lamb breast was a classic of hers and I'll always remember her when cooking this dish. She didn't have a slow cooker though, and would instead cook it in her oven which looked like it dated back to 1975. It even had a rotisserie attachment to cook your chicken. I wish our ovens had that now. Big love to Grandma!

Serves 4-6

4 hours on high / 7 hours on low / + 25 minutes in the oven

2 fennel bulbs, quartered

2 carrots, peeled and cut into chunks

1 onion, quartered

1 garlic bulb, halved horizontally through the middle

2 rosemary sprigs

750g-1kg boneless rolled lamb breast

olive oil

300ml lamb stock

1 tablespoon cornflour, slackened with water

salt and black pepper

1. Get all the veg, and the garlic and rosemary, into the bowl of your slow cooker and season well.
2. Season the lamb breast with the olive oil and plenty of salt and pepper, and place it on top of the vegetables, skin side up, then pour the stock around the meat. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 7 hours, until the lamb is tender.
3. Just before the end of the cooking time, get the oven on to 220°C/200°C fan to heat up. Transfer the lamb and fennel to a roasting tin, brush it with olive oil and season it again. Then, place it in the oven for 25 minutes, until the skin is golden and crispy.
4. In that time, drain the juices from the slow-cooker bowl into a saucepan and add the cornflour slurry. Place the pan over a medium-high heat, bring to a boil and boil until thick and sauce-like.
5. Carve up the roast and serve with the fennel and sauce.

MY SUGGESTIONS

This makes a great option for your Sunday roast. Lamb breast is affordable and you can usually find it on the supermarket shelves, so serve it up with some roasties and a bit of green veg. I like steamed broccoli drizzled with olive oil, seasoned with salt and pepper and a grating of lemon zest.

Fennel can be a love-it-or-hate-it flavour, so if you're not keen on it, use 2 extra onions and cook the dish in exactly the same way.



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PORK.

PULLED PORK

Pulled meats really had their renaissance in the 2000s and now they're everywhere. Fancy a burger? Here's pulled pork on top. Loaded fries? More pulled pork on top. A sandwich? Why not have some pulled pork with that? You know what? This started as a joke, but now I need all three immediately. Use this recipe for your burgers, fries and sandwiches and you will not be disappointed.

Serves 4

5 hours on high / 8-10 hours on low

800g boneless pork shoulder

1 red onion, thinly sliced

½ garlic bulb, cloves separated, peeled and grated or crushed

1 x 400g can of plum tomatoes

2 tablespoons tomato purée

1 tablespoon dark brown soft sugar

1 teaspoon cumin seeds

2 bay leaves

1 heaped teaspoon smoked paprika

about 300ml lager

1-2 teaspoons chilli flakes, to taste

salt and black pepper

1. Season the pork generously with salt and let it come up to room temperature. Cut away any really large fatty pieces, but don't remove it all as this will add lots of flavour and thicken the sauce. You can do this up to a day in advance, if you have time.
2. Add the pork with all the remaining ingredients (crush the plum tomatoes with your hands as you add them) and 1 teaspoon each of salt and pepper to the bowl of your slow cooker, and stir to combine. Put the lid on and cook on high for 5 hours or on low for 8-10 hours, until the pork is completely tender. At this point, remove the skin (it should come away easily) and shred the meat with a fork. Remove the bowl from the heater part and mix the contents well until the shredded pork is evenly distributed throughout the sauce. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed – it should be a balance of sweet, spicy and salty.

MY SUGGESTIONS

If you're feeling extra fun, make yourself some topped fries – cook or bake some fries in the air fryer or oven until crunchy, then toss them in some smoked paprika and salt. Get them in an ovenproof dish and top with hot pulled pork and some plastic cheese slices (they're made to melt so they go perfectly oozy over the pork). Put them under a hot grill for 5-10 minutes for the cheese to melt. Then, drizzle with some soured cream and sprinkle over some chopped spring onions and chopped fresh chillies.



SWEET HONEY AND MUSTARD HAM

A lovely jubbly joint of ham to enjoy how you fancy it. Whether it's for a roast dinner, for sandwiches or for serving classically on a plate with egg and chips, this ham recipe is bloomin' DELISH. Honey and mustard just work perfectly with ham. So good.

Serves 10-20

4-5 hours on low / + 20 minutes in the oven

2 tablespoons wholegrain mustard

4 tablespoons runny honey

1 tablespoon light soy sauce

1 smoked gammon joint (about 1.8kg)

1. Mix the mustard, honey and soy sauce together in a bowl or mug.
2. Place the gammon joint in the bowl of your slow cooker and pour over the sticky glaze. Put the lid on and cook on low for 4-5 hours, until the joint is cooked through and tender.
3. Towards the end of the cooking time, preheat the oven to 220°C/200°C fan.
4. Remove the cooked ham from the slow cooker to a roasting tin and transfer it to the oven for 20 minutes, until golden all over.

5. Pour the slow-cooker juices into a jug. Once the gammon is golden and ready, pour the juices over it before you slice it up and serve.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Does life get better than a plate of ham, egg and chips? It's my go-to suggestion for this mouth-watering ham.

Or get yourself a ham for Christmas! Perfect for your 'picky dinners' on Christmas Eve or Boxing Day – chuck in a bit of leftover stuffing and you're good to go.

This is also great on top of a roasted potato salad. Pop a packet of halved baby potatoes into the air fryer with a drizzle of oil, season with salt and pepper and cook for 30–35 minutes at 200°C (or in the oven at 200°C/180°C fan for 45–50 minutes), until roasted and golden. Whip up a little dressing of 50g of crème fraîche, 50g of soured cream, 1 teaspoon of red wine vinegar, some flaky salt, black pepper, lemon zest and chopped chives, then add in a handful of toasted flaked almonds, 3–4 raw shaved florets of broccoli for a veggie crunch and pour it over the roasted potatoes. Toss it all together and plonk big chunks of the ham on top.



CHORIZO PEPERONATA

An Italian stew of peppers and tomatoes – and if there's one thing we all know about stews ... they're the absolute BEST in the slow cooker. This one is perfect as a side for your meat or fish dishes, and funnily enough also delicious as a pasta sauce. Get your pepper fix with this beautiful dish.

Serves 4

| 2 hours on high / 4 hours on low / + 20 minutes in the oven

30g anchovies in oil (drained weight)

1 tablespoon capers, drained

2 red peppers, deseeded and sliced

1 yellow pepper, deseeded and sliced

1 large onion, chopped

2 garlic cloves, chopped

1 teaspoon garlic granules

1 teaspoon onion powder

1 heaped teaspoon smoked paprika

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 bay leaf

1 x 400g can of plum tomatoes

olive oil, for drizzling

1 cooking chorizo, halved

1-2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

400ml chicken stock

salt and black pepper

1. Preheat your oven to 200°C/180°C fan.
2. Throw the anchovies, capers, peppers, onion, garlic, garlic granules, onion powder, paprika, oregano, bay leaf and plum tomatoes into the ovenproof bowl of your slow cooker (if your slow-cooker bowl isn't ovenproof, throw it all in a baking tray). Season with salt and pepper, and drizzle with olive oil. Roast the veg in the oven until starting to get some colour and char – about 20 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, heat a dry frying pan over a high heat. When hot, add the chorizo halves and fry them until they have released their oil and are blackened. Chuck them on top of the peppers and onions in the slow-cooker bowl (you'll have to tip the veg into the bowl first, if you've used a baking tray). Pour in the red wine vinegar and stock then pop on the lid and leave to cook on high for 2 hours or on low for 4 hours.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Serve this on its own with crusty bread, or you can pan-roast some pork chops or a pork fillet to have on top – rub the meat with the same seasoning mixture as for the peperonata to give it a deep, smoky flavour, then get it into a frying pan with a drizzle of oil over a high heat to get some colour and caramelisation on the outside, making sure it's cooked all the way through before serving.



BBQ PORK RIBS

I know I've worked in fine dining and Michelin-starred restaurants and I should probably have a high-brow view on food, but I don't think you can beat a big ol' plate of BBQ ribs at one of those restaurants where you get unlimited salads on the side. I love to get down-and-dirty with my food. I also love those fancy little wet wipes that you get with your ribs to clean your hands afterwards. That's my sign of a good dish – if it's served with a little wipe for after-use.

Serves 2–4

4 hours on high / 8 hours on low / + marinating / + 10–15 minutes in the oven

2 racks of pork ribs

2 tablespoons cider vinegar

150g smoky barbecue sauce (I like the Sauce Shop one)

2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce

100ml chicken stock

For the spice rub

2 teaspoons smoked paprika

1 tablespoon light brown soft sugar

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs

1 teaspoon garlic granules

1 teaspoon onion powder

½ teaspoon hot chilli powder

1. Mix up all the ingredients for the spice rub in a small bowl and massage this into the ribs on both sides. Make sure your ribs will fit in the slow cooker, otherwise cut them in half. Cover and leave the ribs to marinate for at least 1 hour, but ideally overnight in the fridge.
2. Mix together the vinegar, barbecue sauce, Worcestershire sauce and chicken stock in a jug. Put the ribs in the slow cooker and pour over the liquid. Make sure they're all coated, then put the lid on and cook for 4 hours on high or 8 hours on low, until the meat is tender and falling off the bones.
3. Preheat your oven to 200°C/180°C fan. Lay the ribs on an ovenproof tray and brush over the juices from the slow cooker bowl. Pop them into the oven and finish off for 10–15 minutes to give a sticky final glaze over the top.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Get these served up with some roasted sweet potato cubes, with cumin. Just peel and cube up some sweet potatoes (about 2cm dice are good), drizzle with oil, season with salt and pepper and sprinkle over about 1 teaspoon of cumin seeds. If you have an air fryer, get them into that basket at 200°C for 25 minutes (or, use the oven at the same temperature for about 35–40 minutes), until caramelised and tender.

Serve with some easy slaw made with thinly sliced red cabbage, grated carrot and sliced red onion – mix with some mayonnaise and season

well.

CHAR SIU PORK

Here we have a sticky, Asian-inspired, glazed pork. Need I say more. It is a lovely bit of meat and you'll probably want to keep eating it all week long. It's one of those dishes that you put in the middle of the table and people just keep picking until there are none of the leftovers you were hoping for. So, a word of warning: be careful and save some in the kitchen if you want any for tomorrow.

Serves 4

5 hours on high / 8-10 hours on low

800g skinless, boneless pork shoulder, diced

½ garlic bulb, cloves separated, peeled and grated or crushed

thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and grated or julienned

400ml chicken stock

4 tablespoons hoisin sauce

1 tablespoon runny honey

2 tablespoons light soy sauce, plus extra to taste

2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar

1 heaped teaspoon chilli flakes

2 teaspoons Chinese five spice

salt and black pepper

1. Season the pork generously with salt and let it come up to room temperature. Cut away any really large fatty pieces, but don't

remove all the fat, as this will add lots of flavour and thicken the sauce. You can prep the pork up to a day in advance, if you have time.

2. Add the pork with all the remaining ingredients to the bowl of your slow cooker, and stir to combine. Put the lid on and cook on high for 5 hours or on low for 8-10 hours, until the pork is completely tender and shreds easily with a fork.
3. Remove the majority of the pork from the sauce and set it aside. Drain the rest of the juice from the slow cooker into a saucepan. Place the pan over a high heat and bring to a boil. Boil until the liquid has reduced by half and become a sticky glaze.
4. Add the reserved pork to the sauce in the pan and taste to check the seasoning, adjusting as needed.

MY SUGGESTIONS

This is perfect on top of fried rice – just make sure you're using day-old rice, because freshly cooked rice just goes mushy! You want the grains to stay separate and soak up some soy sauce. For my super-simple stir-fried rice, get a wok smoking hot with a drizzle of sesame oil and crack in 3 eggs. Very quickly scramble this up and remove the scramble from the wok. Fry the sliced-up white parts of 3 spring onions in a bit more sesame oil, then add in your cold, day-old rice. Toss this together until the rice starts to crisp up, then pour in 2 tablespoons of light soy sauce to season everything up. Just before you're ready to serve, throw the scrambled eggs back in to reheat and dish up with the sliced green parts of the spring onions on top.



OVERNIGHT APPLE AND CIDER PORK BAP

One of the top romances in the food world has to be pork and apple. It just goes together in perfect harmony, hitting all the right notes and marrying as one beautiful porky, apple delight. It's a top-tier flavour combo.

Serves 4-6

 10 hours (overnight) on low

2kg boneless pork shoulder

2 onions, peeled and quartered

2 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and quartered

200ml dry cider (or use apple juice)

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

150g dark brown soft sugar

1 teaspoon chilli flakes

75ml apple juice

1 tablespoon runny honey

4-6 soft baps or buns, to serve

For the rub

1 tablespoon smoked paprika

½ tablespoon ground cumin

1½ teaspoons salt

plenty of cracked black pepper

1 teaspoon garlic granules

1 teaspoon fennel seeds

1 tablespoon dried mixed herbs

1. Mix all of the rub ingredients together in a small bowl and rub this all over the pork, massaging it in so that the meat is well coated all over.
2. Put the onions and apples in the bottom of the slow-cooker bowl, then the rubbed pork on top. Pour the cider (or apple juice) around the sides of the pork, taking care not to pour it straight over the top, then put the lid on and cook on low for 10 hours (overnight), until the pork is very tender.
3. Strain the cooking juices from the slow cooker. Remove the apples, mush them with a fork and set aside. Keep the onions as you can serve them with the pork.
4. Pour the pork juices into a small saucepan. Add the mashed apples, vinegar, sugar, chilli flakes, apple juice and honey. Stir to combine, then place the pan over a medium-high heat. Bring the liquid up to a bubble and cook gently until it becomes thick and glossy (about 10 minutes). Set aside to cool slightly while you carve.
5. Remove the skin and carve up your pork shoulder, or (which is what I like to do) pull it apart and get it in the baps with some onions, lashings of your apple sauce and drizzled in that sticky cider sauce.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Want an even fancier bap? Add some sage and onion stuffing for extra luxury.

Alternatively, and I know they're usually reserved only for Christmas, but sprouts go perfectly with this pork. Halve 200g of sprouts. Put a frying pan over a medium-high heat with a good glug of vegetable oil, then add the sprouts cut side down so they can sear and get a nice dark brown colour on one side, Give them a toss, scoop them out and set aside. In the same pan, fry about 100g of smoked bacon lardons or chopped streaky bacon until nearly cooked, then add the sprouts back into the pan. Season well and splash in 50ml or so of chicken stock to help them steam. Put a lid on the pan and cook for 8-10 minutes, until the sprouts are tender but with a slight bite. Add a few tablespoons of double cream and dish up.



PORK AND BEEF MEATBALLS

Delicious, succulent, meaty. You're probably used to making your own meaty balls in the pan – but why not try the slow cooker next time to make the whole thing a bit easier? It's the only way I eat my meaty balls now!

Serves 4 (makes 12–16 balls)

3 hours on high

For the meatballs

2 slices of bread, crusts discarded, torn into small pieces

whole milk

250g pork mince

250g beef mince

2 garlic cloves, crushed

1 egg

small handful of flat-leaf parsley, leaves roughly chopped

salt and black pepper

For the sauce

2 x 400g cans of plum tomatoes

1 tablespoon tomato purée

6 garlic cloves, crushed

small handful of basil, a few leaves reserved to serve

2 tablespoons olive oil, plus extra to serve

½ teaspoon white sugar, if needed

To serve

spaghetti, cooked to packet instructions

grated parmesan

green salad

1. To make the meatballs, sit the bread in a small bowl and pour over just enough milk to cover. Set aside for 10 minutes or so, while you prepare the other ingredients.
2. Add the pork mince, beef mince, garlic, egg and parsley to a bowl and season generously with salt and pepper. Once you've done that, roughly squash the soaked bread with a fork and pour away any excess milk. Add the bread to the bowl of mince and mix everything together – I find it best to do this with your hands so you can really squish everything together and tenderise the meat.
3. Roll the mixture into 12–16 equal-sized balls, transferring them to a plate as you go. Chill the balls in the fridge while you make the sauce. Don't worry if you can't get the balls neatly spherical right now – they'll be easier to shape once they've been in the fridge.
4. For the sauce, add the plum tomatoes (squishing them as they go in), tomato purée, garlic, basil, olive oil and 1 teaspoon each of salt and pepper to the bowl of your slow cooker. Put the lid on and cook on high for 2 hours, until glossy and fragrant. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust – you may need to add the sugar, depending on how acidic the canned tomatoes are.

5. Add the meatballs to the slow cooker – gently reshaping them into balls as they go in – and cook on high for 1 hour, until soft and tender. Serve with spaghetti, plenty of parmesan and a green salad, with the reserved basil leaves on top.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Freeze your balls! Get them into a tub raw and freeze them for up to 6 months, so they're ready for an easy dinner when you need them.

If you want to try another flavour, add 2 teaspoons of ground cumin, 2 teaspoons of ground coriander and 1 teaspoon of dried mixed herbs into the meatball mixture. To ramp up the tomato sauce, add a drained can of anchovies, 1 jar of drained pitted black olives and a few roasted red peppers from a jar, for a more Mediterranean-inspired meal.



SAUSAGE CASSEROLE

This dish instantly feels warm and snuggly. I don't know how food can feel like a hug, but a sausage casserole is the definition of a BIG HUG dish. It's for when you've had a bad day at work and need a snuggle. Or for when you've just walked the dog and it started bucketing down with rain and you need a warm cuddle. Or for when your dog has just decided to roll in something not-so-pleasant in the garden and you're trying to wash him in the shower and he's so big because you for some reason bought a German Shepherd because he was such a cute little puppy and you didn't think about how he would one day be 55kg and he accidentally headbutts you in the face and knocks you to the floor in the shower and now you're wet, sad and crying. Okay – 10 points for guessing what happened to me today?

Serves 4

4 hours on high

8 good-quality sausages (about 800g in total), halved (or quartered if they're very big!)

1 onion, sliced

2 celery sticks, thickly sliced

4 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

1 teaspoon fennel seeds

2 bay leaves

2 tablespoons tomato purée

2 x 400g cans of cannellini beans, drained (or use butter beans)

200ml white or light red wine

1 chicken stock cube, crumbled

200g cavolo nero, sliced

salt and black pepper

grated parmesan or pecorino, to serve

extra-virgin olive oil, to serve

1. Add the sausages, onion, celery, garlic, fennel seeds, bay leaves, tomato purée, cannellini beans, wine and stock cube to the bowl of your slow cooker. Season with 1 teaspoon of salt and lots of black pepper, then stir everything together. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours, until the sausages are completely tender. When the timer has 15–20 minutes left, stir in the cavolo nero and cook for the remaining time, until wilted.
2. Season to taste with more salt and pepper and serve with lots of grated parmesan or pecorino and a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Sausage casserole needs to have plenty of good crusty bread slathered in good-quality salted butter – none of this margarine nonsense. This is the perfect winter comfort food, so enjoy having some extra carb.

You can swap out the pork sausages for some good-quality vegetarian sausages, if you prefer – just use a vegetable stock cube instead of the chicken, too, if you're actually cooking for a veggie.



HONEY-GLAZED PIGS IN BLANKETS

This is my usual plan for the weekend – to be a honey-glazed pig in a blanket and let the world just go by. These are as cute as they are delicious. Incredible at Christmas time. Equally as good during the other 11 months of the year. Pigs in blankets are for life, not just for Christmas.

Makes 10

1 hour on high

10 rashers of smoked streaky bacon

10 chipolatas

oil, for greasing

3 tablespoons runny honey or maple syrup

1 teaspoon chilli flakes

1 garlic clove, grated or crushed

½ tablespoon dark brown soft sugar

salt and black pepper

1. Wrap a slice of streaky bacon around each of your sausages. Secure the ends with a cocktail stick to stop them unravelling. Lightly oil the bottom of your slow-cooker bowl so the bacon doesn't stick.
2. Combine the honey or maple syrup, chilli flakes and garlic in a small saucepan and place it over a medium-high heat. Leave it to heat up

and then bubble gently for a few minutes until aromatic.

3. Arrange the pigs in blankets in the bottom of the slow-cooker bowl in a single layer and brush over some of the hot honey mixture (save the rest for later). Sprinkle over the brown sugar, put the lid on and cook on high for 1 hour, until the sausages are cooked through and the glaze is sticky.
4. Brush the sausages with the rest of the glaze just before serving so they are at top sticky deliciousness when you serve.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Serve these piggies as a side with a roast dinner, or halved and made into pigs-in-blankets toad in the hole, or even as a very naughty breakfast sandwich. Use cocktail sausages for baby piggies – 20 cocktail sausages and slice the bacon rashers in half to shorten, and you're good to cook as before.



JACK DANIEL'S PORK

This is my best ever Jack Daniel's sauce recipe and it can be made in the slow cooker if you just want a delicious glaze for any meat. Me and my mom have been trying to recreate the classic from TGI Friday's for years, and in 2022 I had a breakthrough. This is as good as the classic JD sauce you get from the restaurant.

Serves 4

5 hours on high / 8-10 hours on low

800g skinless, boneless pork shoulder, diced

300g banana shallots, finely chopped

1 bulb of garlic, cloves separated, peeled and grated or crushed

thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and grated

190ml sweet teriyaki sauce

4 tablespoons tomato chutney from a jar

200g dark muscovado sugar

1 x 435g can of pineapple rings in syrup (including the syrup)

5 tablespoons maple syrup

1 teaspoon cider vinegar

100ml Jack Daniel's

salt and black pepper

1. Throw everything into the bowl of your slow cooker with 300ml of water. Mix really well, season with salt and pepper, then put the lid on and cook on high for 5 hours or on low for 8-10 hours, until the pork is tender. Remove the meat from the slow cooker and transfer it to a dish. Pull it apart with two forks.
2. Pour the sauce left in the slow cooker into a saucepan over a high heat and bring it to a boil, then turn the heat down to a simmer and let it cook and bubble away for around 30 minutes, until you have a thick glaze. Mash the pineapple down a little with a fork.
3. Add the sauce back to the pork and mix well. You'll have this sweet, sticky pork that will blow your socks off.

MY SUGGESTIONS

I think the best way to eat this is pulled and on top of a beef burger, with extra cheese and two patties.

It's also great to load on top of chips, for the ultimate loaded fries: Top and tail 4-6 large red-skinned potatoes. Then cut down each side of the potato until it's square-ish. Peel off any skin that's left. Cut the square potatoes into French-fry sticks and get them into a pan covered with cold water. Season heavily with salt. Bring to a boil and cook for 7 minutes, then drain and leave to cool/steam dry on a rack over a tray. Then, place a tea towel over them. Leave them until cool to touch. Place enough oil into a saucepan to deep-fry (don't fill the saucepan more than half way up) or use a deep-fat fryer. Using a thermometer, get the oil to 130°C. Then fry the fries in batches, until they have a solid outside, with no colour. Scoop from the pan carefully with a slotted spoon and place them back on the rack to cool. When they are completely cooled

down (use the fridge, if you need to), get the oil up to 180°C and re-fry the fries until completely golden and ready to eat. While that's all happening, slice a red onion, drain a small tin of sweetcorn and mix 1 teaspoon of wholegrain mustard into some mayonnaise. To serve up, load your fries into a bowl, scatter over the onion and sweetcorn, top with the JD pulled pork and drizzle with mustard mayo.



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TURKEY.

TURKEY BREAST

Turkey isn't just for Christmas. I've got a dish for every season, but this one deserves to be made year-round. Plus, if anyone still believes that turkey is 'dry' or 'tough', they'll be converted after getting their mouth around this tender breast.

Serves 6

4½ hours on low / + resting

1.5–2kg turkey breast, with skin (depending what will fit in the bowl of your slow cooker)

1 large onion, peeled and quartered

1 garlic bulb, halved horizontally across the middle

200ml chicken stock

For the flavoured butter

200g butter, softened

1 lemon, zested

1 orange, zested

1½ teaspoons garlic granules

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

3–4 rosemary sprigs, leaves chopped

3–4 thyme sprigs, leaves chopped

3–4 sage sprigs, leaves chopped

salt and black pepper

1. Mix together the ingredients for the flavoured butter in a small bowl.
2. Separate the flesh and the skin of the turkey to make a pocket for your butter. Spoon the butter into the pocket, then, through the skin, massage it into flesh – try to end up with an even layer over the top of the bird.
3. Put your quartered onion and halved garlic bulb into the bowl of your slow cooker so that the turkey has something to sit on, then rest the turkey on top. Pour the chicken stock around the bird – you can use this stock and the buttery turkey juices later for an incredible gravy. Put the lid on and cook on low for 4½ hours, then use a thermometer to check the core temperature – it should be about 70°C. When it reaches this temperature, turn off the slow cooker and leave the lid on to let the meat rest for 15–20 minutes.
4. Preheat your grill to high and, if you have an ovensafe slow-cooker bowl, place it under the heat. If you don't, carefully transfer the bird to a more suitable baking dish. Let the skin brown and crisp up, then you're ready to carve.

MY SUGGESTIONS

For your gravy, strain off all the juices from the bird and squeeze out the soft garlic cloves. Melt 50g of butter in a saucepan over a medium heat. Chuck in 2 tablespoons of plain flour and stir this until the flour has cooked out and you have a smooth paste. Slowly pour in your hot, buttery turkey stock until you reach your desired thickness. Season well

with salt and pepper, then drench that delicious turkey with saucy goodness.

You can serve this with the sides for a traditional Sunday roast, or try serving with roasted Mediterranean veg. Simply cut up an aubergine, a courgette, a red onion, a handful of cherry tomatoes and 3 garlic cloves. Get it all in an ovenproof dish with 2 tablespoons of tomato purée, 1 teaspoon of dried oregano, and 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Season with salt and pepper and roast at 200°C/180°C fan for 40 minutes, stirring occasionally. That, with your turkey, a side salad and some crusty bread, is a delight.



TURKEY CASSEROLE AND DUMPLINGS

This is like a big warm hug in a bowl. A good alternative to a chicken soup when you're sick, with loads of hearty root vegetables. I want to lead the renaissance for turkey meat because the poor chick gets underestimated time and time again. It's a deliciously different option to have on your radar, with less fatty meat that still takes on flavour brilliantly. Try this and tell me turkey is bland.

Serves 4-6

| 4 hours on high / 8 hours on low

1 onion, cut into 2cm dice

1 small leek, cut into 2cm dice

½ swede, peeled and cut into 2cm dice

2 carrots, peeled and cut into 2cm dice

1 large Maris Piper, peeled and cut into 2cm dice

500g turkey breast, cut into 4cm chunks

2 tablespoons plain flour

1 litre chicken stock

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

½ tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

2 thyme sprigs, leaves chopped

2 rosemary sprigs, leaves chopped

150g frozen peas

salt and black pepper

For the dumplings

150g plain flour

70g grated beef or vegetarian suet

1 teaspoon wholegrain mustard

1. Put all of the diced vegetables into the bowl of your slow cooker with the turkey. Sprinkle in the 2 tablespoons of flour and season well with salt and pepper. Mix everything through to combine.
2. Pour the stock into a jug and add the Dijon mustard, Worcestershire sauce and chopped thyme and rosemary. Stir everything together, then pour the mixture over the turkey and vegetables. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 8 hours. When there is 40 minutes left on the cooking time, add the frozen peas.
3. While the peas are cooking, make your dumplings. In a large bowl mix together the 150g of flour and the suet and season with salt and pepper. Make a well in the centre of the dry mixture and add the wholegrain mustard. Pour 2–3 tablespoons of cold water into the well. Bring the mixture together into a stiff dough – if it looks a bit crumbly, add 1 extra tablespoon of water. When it has all come together, form the mixture into 6–8 dumplings and pop these on top of the casserole in the slow cooker when there is 30 minutes left of cooking time.
4. Cook for 20 minutes with the lid on to steam and then remove the lid for the final 10 minutes to reduce slightly.

MY SUGGESTIONS

If you aren't a fan of mustard in your dumplings, leave it out, or you can replace it with some fresh rosemary and thyme.

Serve up the casserole with ultra-creamy mashed potatoes. Peel 4 Maris Piper or russet potatoes and slice into 1cm-thick rounds (rounds will cook more evenly than chunks). Place the potatoes into a saucepan and just cover with cold water. Add 2 tablespoons of salt, and boil for 10–15 minutes, until fork tender. Drain the potatoes and place a tea towel over the top so they steam dry, for 5 minutes. Then, pass them through a sieve or potato ricer. Add 75g of salted butter. Warm up about 50–75ml of double cream and add to the potatoes. Mix and serve.



TURKEY MINCE CHILLI

You know by now I'm a big believer in swapping in turkey meat every now and then, for a change – and this turkey chilli is a good start if you want to try a leaner mince for dinner. Turkey's not just for Christmas, it's for your chilli-con-carne nights, too.

Serves 4

| 1½ hours on high / 3 hours on low

2 tablespoons vegetable oil, plus 1 tablespoon for frying the onion

1 tablespoon smoked paprika

1 teaspoon hot chilli powder

1½ teaspoons ground cumin

1 teaspoon ground coriander

1 teaspoon dried oregano

500g turkey mince

1 red onion, diced

2 garlic cloves, chopped

1 x 400g can of red kidney beans, drained

1 x 400g can of chopped tomatoes

1 tablespoon tomato purée

1 chicken stock cube

salt and black pepper

1. Preheat a large frying pan over a medium heat and drizzle in 2 tablespoons of the vegetable oil. Add the paprika, chilli powder, cumin, coriander and oregano and leave to fry over a medium heat for 30 seconds or so, until aromatic. Add the turkey mince and turn it through the spices, breaking it up as you go. Fry for 5–10 minutes, until golden brown, then season with salt and pepper. Tip the turkey into the slow-cooker bowl.
2. Add the tablespoon of oil to the frying pan and add the onion. Fry for 5–7 minutes, until soft and translucent and then add the garlic and fry for 1 minute to soften. Tip the onion and garlic into the bowl of your slow cooker and add the kidney beans, tomatoes and tomato purée. Crumble in the stock cube, stir, then put the lid on and cook on high for 1½ hours or on low for 3 hours.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Serve big spoonfuls of the chilli over cooked long-grain rice with a dollop each of soured cream and guacamole (see [here](#)) and a good handful of grated strong cheddar. This is a great meal prep dish for your week at work and it can be so versatile. A simple way to cook rice (for this or any dish) is to get 1 cup of basmati rice and wash the rice three times under running water. Then pop the rice into a large saucepan with 2 cups of cold water and bring it to a boil, then boil for 3 minutes. Turn off the heat and cover with cling film and a tight-fitting lid, then leave to stand for 11 minutes. Perfect rice, every time.

And, rice is good, but you can also chuck the chilli on a jacket potato one day or in a toastie the next, or have it with nachos, or even put it on pasta because, who cares? It'll taste delicious even if it's not traditional.

PULLED TURKEY BUNS

We are a big bap family. We're all about getting your bread roll – bap, cob, whatever you call it – and filling it to the brim with pulled meat, loaded with all the bits you'd usually have with a Sunday roast and just devouring. You might think to go with pork if you're pulling, but turkey makes a nice change and is equally delicious.

Serves 4–6

| 4¼ hours on high / 6½ hours on low / + 10 minutes on high to melt the cheese

1 bone-in turkey thigh (about 750g)

2 onions, sliced

200ml pineapple juice

150g light brown soft sugar

1 garlic clove, grated

3 tablespoons tomato ketchup

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

4–6 slices of American burger cheese

4–6 brioche buns, sliced open and lightly toasted, to serve

For the rub

2 teaspoons smoked paprika

2 teaspoons ground cumin

2 teaspoons garlic granules

1 teaspoon onion powder

2 teaspoons salt

2 teaspoons dried mixed herbs

black pepper

1. Mix together all the rub ingredients in a small bowl and season with plenty of black pepper. Rub the mixture all over the turkey.
2. Put the onions at the bottom of the bowl of the slow cooker and pop the turkey thigh joint on top. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 6 hours, until you are able to pull the turkey off the bone with a fork.
3. Meanwhile, stir together the pineapple juice, brown sugar, garlic, ketchup and Worcestershire sauce in a small saucepan over a medium-high heat. Bring the mixture to a simmer and leave it to bubble for 7-10 minutes, until it reduces and thickens to a barbecue-sauce consistency. Taste and adjust the seasoning as necessary.
4. When the turkey is cooked, pour off any turkey juices and add them to your sauce. Remove the bone and the skin from the turkey and, in the bowl, shred the meat with two forks until it resembles pulled pork. Pour over some of your sauce and leave it all to get nice and hot in the slow cooker (lid on), with the turkey and onions (about 15 minutes on high or 30 minutes on low).
5. Lay the slices of burger cheese over the top of the meat and put the lid back on the slow cooker. Cook on high for 10 minutes, until the cheese starts to melt and ooze. Serve up in the brioche buns.

MY SUGGESTIONS

A side of slaw (see [here](#)) is a must. And you can leave out the cheese, and instead whap on some sage-and-onion stuffing and a bit of cranberry sauce. A full-on flavour bap.

This is more of a sweet barbecue sauce, with a bit of a tropical hit from the pineapple juice. If you want to change it up to be a bit fiery, squeeze in a good tablespoon of hot sauce and a big pinch of smoked paprika, too.



ASIAN-STYLE TURKEY MINCE

This is a take on the meat you'd find in a yuk sung at your local Chinese restaurant or takeaway – you know the dish where you wrap it in a lettuce leaf and munch on down. For some reason, this becomes my go-to when I'm in a Keep Fit era (which is rare). I think maybe because you're wrapping it in lettuce and turkey mince is so much leaner than other meats, you just feel it's healthy.

Serves 4

| 1 hour on high / 2½ hours on low / + 30–40 minutes on high, if needed

500g turkey mince

2 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and grated

1½ teaspoons Chinese five spice

1 tablespoon runny honey

1 teaspoon chilli flakes

1½ tablespoons dark soy sauce

2 teaspoons fish sauce

splash of hot water

150g frozen peas

To serve

1 iceberg lettuce, leaves separated and washed

small handful of sesame seeds or crushed peanuts

2–3 spring onions, sliced

2 red chillies, deseeded and thinly sliced

1. Break up your turkey mince into smaller pieces in the bowl of your slow cooker, using a spoon. Mix together the garlic, ginger, five spice, honey, chilli flakes, soy sauce and fish sauce in a small bowl with a splash of hot water, then pour this over the mince.
2. Stir to combine everything, then put the lid on and cook on high for 1 hour or on low for 2½ hours, until the mince is cooked through and the sauce is thickening slightly. Throw in the peas when you have 30 minutes of cooking time left. If the sauce is still thin, lift the lid and cook on high for an extra 30–40 minutes.
3. To serve, grab your biggest leaf of iceberg lettuce, load it with your turkey mince and top with sesame seeds or crushed peanuts, sliced spring onions and red chilli.

MY SUGGESTIONS

You can make a meal of it and serve the turkey up with some delicious, cooked jasmine rice and the same garnishes.



BIRRIA-INSPIRED TURKEY TACOS

I made these when I went glamping with our friends Beth and Jack, and they were a hit. I shouldn't really be sharing my recipes with Beth as last time she made my gyros, they then became 'her' signature dish that all her family were telling me was amazing. That's because it's my recipe, bab. Anyway, these tacos of deliciously pulled turkey are a winner, and I don't mind if ANY of you want to pass it off as your signature dish.

Serves 4-8

| 5-6 hours on high / 8-10 hours on low

2 tablespoons light brown soft sugar

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 bone-in turkey thigh (about 750g)

190g ancho chilli paste

100g chipotle paste

½ garlic bulb, cloves separated

4 large tomatoes, quartered

2 onions, peeled and quartered

7cm cinnamon stick

1 tablespoon tomato purée

3 dried guajillo chillies (optional)

chicken stock

salt and black pepper

To serve

splash of vegetable oil

8-16 small corn tacos

200g cheddar, grated

200g mozzarella, grated

1-2 onions, finely chopped

few handfuls of coriander leaves

1. In a small bowl, mix together the brown sugar, paprika, oregano and cumin, along with a teaspoon each of salt and cracked black pepper.
2. Get everything else into the bowl of your slow cooker, add enough stock to come halfway up the turkey, season well and then stir in your spice mixture. Put the lid on and cook on high for 5-6 hours or on low for 8-10 hours, until the turkey is falling off the bone. Discard the bone and the skin and shred the meat left behind in the bowl.
3. To make up your tacos, get a frying pan over a medium heat with a splash of oil. Then get your first corn taco and dip it in the sauce that's in the slow cooker. Using kitchen tongs to hold it, place it in the frying pan, laying it flat. Add some shredded turkey to the centre of your taco, top with cheeses, onion and coriander, then fold your taco over and cook on both sides for a bit of charring and extra flavour. Remove to a baking tray while you repeat the process for all your tacos. You can keep them warm by putting them in the

oven on a low temperature while you make up the rest. (At some point, as you use up the turkey, be sure to pick out the cinnamon stick and discard it so as not to give someone a turkey taco surprise.) I would serve at least 2 tacos per person, but if you're hungry, have more.

MY SUGGESTIONS

You have to serve them with some guacamole (see [here](#)), salsa and hot sauce. Sometimes it's best to keep things simple.



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VEGGIE.

MUSHROOM RISOTTO

Plain rice is a tricky one in the slow cooker. You'll see that in most recipes in this book, when rice is a side, I'd recommend cooking it separately, in the usual way, as I don't want you to have to juggle with the inconsistency that slow-cooker rice brings. Risotto, though, works better, so give it a go. This recipe is truly delicious and a lovely warming dinner for you and the fam.

Serves 4

| 2 hours on low

300g risotto rice

2 leeks, thinly sliced

3 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

300g mixed mushrooms, sliced (chestnut, shiitake and oyster are a good combo)

200ml white wine

450ml vegetable stock

200g frozen peas, defrosted

80g parmesan, grated, plus extra to serve

knob of butter

salt and black pepper

flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped, to serve (optional)

1. Add the rice, leeks, garlic, mushrooms, wine and stock to the bowl of your slow cooker. Season with 1 teaspoon of salt and plenty of pepper, then stir everything together.
2. Cook on low for 2 hours, stirring once or twice so that the rice cooks evenly, until the rice is al dente and all of the liquid has been absorbed.
3. Once the rice is cooked, stir in the peas, then beat in the parmesan and butter until rich and creamy. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed.
4. Divide the risotto between four plates, grate over some extra parmesan and add a crack of black pepper. Some roughly chopped parsley is always a nice addition.

MY SUGGESTIONS

This is one of those recipes that does actually have to be cooked on low so that it can give your rice long enough to cook through and release all of that starch to help thicken things up. I always finish my risottos with a good grating of lemon zest, and if you're not making this for a veggie, some sliced up and fried chorizo on top adds that extra bit of oomph.



PUTTANESCA

A puttanesca pasta takes me straight to the Mediterranean – delicious olives, rich tomato sauce and gorgeous fresh pasta. I love olives, so this dish really is a bit of me. Crack open a nice glass of wine and imagine you're on holiday.

Serves 4

4 hours on high / + 25–30 minutes to cook the spaghetti

4 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

1 red onion, finely diced

2 x 400g cans of cherry tomatoes

4 tablespoons capers, drained

165g pitted kalamata olives

1 tablespoon tomato purée

½ teaspoon white sugar

1 teaspoon chilli flakes

300g spaghetti or penne

small handful flat-leaf parsley, leaves roughly chopped

olive oil

salt and black pepper

1. Add the garlic, onion, cherry tomatoes, capers, olives, tomato purée, sugar, chilli flakes and ½ teaspoon of salt to the bowl of your

slow cooker and season well with pepper. Fill one of the empty tomato cans with water and add this, too. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours, stirring once or twice during cooking.

2. After 4 hours, stir in the spaghetti (snapping in half if necessary to get it to fit) or penne, making sure that the pasta is fully submerged in the sauce, and cook for 25–30 minutes on high, until al dente.
3. Stir in most of the parsley (reserve a little to serve) and a good splash of olive oil, until you have nice, glossy sauce that coats the pasta. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed.
4. Divide the puttanesca between four bowls and drizzle over some more olive oil. Crack over some black pepper and scatter over the remaining parsley.

MY SUGGESTIONS

As a non-veggie, I like to add a can of anchovies to this recipe, because I love the saltiness of them – if you're not a veggie, too, I would 100-percent recommend this.

Make yourself a little 'Mediterranean garlic bread' to serve up with the puttanesca. Heat your oven to 200°C/180°C fan (or use your air fryer at 200°C). Blitz a jar of pitted black olives, half a can of anchovies (optional), zest and juice of 1 lemon, a crushed garlic clove, a handful of flat-leaf parsley and a tablespoon of capers in a mini processor (or just chop it straight on the board), season to taste and add a drizzle of oil if it's too thick. Spread your slices of baguette with garlic butter and a good spoonful of the tapenade, then bake for 8–10 minutes or air fry for 5–8 minutes, until golden around the edges.



TOFU CURRY

This one is for the veggies – and also one to convert the tofu-haters. Tofu has a bad rep among meat-eaters, I know, but it's actually delicious when cooked right. This dish is spicy, easy and actually delicious. So, give it a go and see how good tofu can be.

Serves 4

| 3 hours on high / 6 hours on low

280g firm tofu, drained and cut into 2cm dice
3 garlic cloves, grated or crushed
small thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and grated
20 fresh curry leaves
400ml full-fat coconut milk
1 x 400g can of chickpeas, drained
500g cherry tomatoes
2 teaspoons garam masala
½ teaspoon ground turmeric
pinch of dried chilli flakes, to taste
1 vegetable stock cube, crumbled
80g sugar snap peas
3 tablespoons natural yoghurt
salt and black pepper

1. Add the tofu, garlic, ginger, curry leaves, coconut milk, chickpeas, tomatoes, garam masala, turmeric, chilli flakes and crumbled stock cube to the bowl of your slow cooker. Season with 1 teaspoon of salt and plenty of pepper. Stir to combine, put the lid on and cook on high for 2½ hours or on low for 5½ hours.
2. Throw in the sugar snap peas and continue to cook for 30 minutes until everything is tender and fragrant. Give everything a taste before you serve; you might need an extra lime on the side to squeeze in for a bit of a zesty lift, and adjust the seasoning if necessary.
3. Divide the curry between four bowls and serve with steamed rice or flat breads and poppadoms, topped with the yoghurt.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Make sure you use proper, full-fat coconut milk in this recipe. The low-fat stuff is a bit too watery and doesn't thicken up quite the same, which is what makes this dish so unctuous.



PEANUT SATAY CURRY

Mmmm, yes please – a lovely, nutty satay curry. I love a good nut. The peanuts in this dish make for a delicious savoury curry that proves a satay doesn't just have to be a chicken on a stick. Cook this up for your veggie friends and the meat-eaters won't be complaining either.

Serves 4

| 2-3 hours on high / 6 hours on low

1 vegetable stock cube, plus extra if needed

200ml boiling water

2 sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 2cm dice

4 garlic cloves, crushed

1 lime, zested and juiced

1 x 400g can of chickpeas, drained

400ml full-fat coconut milk

150g peanut butter

2 tablespoons runny honey

2 tablespoons dark soy sauce

2 teaspoons mild curry powder

½ teaspoon ground turmeric

150g kale, stems removed and sliced

salt and black pepper

To serve

thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and julienned

4 spring onions, sliced

handful of coriander, leaves chopped

2 red chillies, deseeded and thinly sliced

1. First, dissolve the stock cube in the boiling water. Then add it to the bowl of your slow cooker with everything else except the kale. Season with 1 teaspoon of salt and plenty of pepper and stir to combine. Put the lid on and cook on high for 2–3 hours or on low for 6 hours, until the sweet potato is completely tender. When the timer has 15 minutes left, stir in the kale.
2. Once the curry is cooked, taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed. If you prefer curry a little more loose, stir in more stock to your preferred consistency.
3. Divide the curry between four bowls and scatter over the ginger, spring onions, coriander and chillies.

MY SUGGESTIONS

This curry is delicious served with simply steamed white rice.

I love having some extra salted peanuts on top of my satay curry for a bit more of a crunch. Toss them in some curry powder and roast off in a hot oven (about 200°C/180°C fan) for 15–20 minutes with a drizzle of oil (or use your air fryer at 200°C for 7–10 minutes), then roughly chop them and sprinkle them over the finished curry.



TOMATO AND SPINACH DAHL

It's in Indian cuisine where you find out that meat isn't really that important all the time and that vegan food can be delicious too. This dahl stands alone as a tasty, hearty dish, with spices and flavours to warm you right up.

Serves 4-6

 2 hours on high

300g red lentils, rinsed

2 onions, finely diced

2 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

small thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and grated

2 finger chillies, slit lengthways (optional)

1 bay leaf

½ teaspoon ground turmeric

1 teaspoon cumin seeds

900ml vegetable stock, plus extra if needed

2 plum tomatoes, seeds removed and flesh diced

2 large handfuls of spinach

1 lemon, juiced

splash of olive oil

salt

1. Add the lentils, onions, garlic, ginger, chillies (if using), bay leaf, turmeric, cumin seeds and stock to the bowl of your slow cooker. Season with 1 teaspoon of salt. Put the lid on and cook on high for 2 hours, stirring once or twice during that time.
2. Once the dahl is cooked, stir in the diced tomatoes and spinach. Allow the spinach to briefly wilt, stir in the lemon juice and oil, then taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed. If you prefer your dahl a little looser, stir in more stock as needed.

MY SUGGESTIONS

I like to serve this with some Indian flat breads for dipping.

Alternatively, it's a great dish to serve on the side of any of the other curries in this book if you fancy an Indian feast one night.



VEGGIE BOLOGNESE

This section isn't just for my veggie readers out there, because I made sure each dish is so good that you wouldn't even miss the meat. These are veggie (and in this case vegan) dishes for meat-eaters too. Bolognese is one of those that can really stand up for itself without the meat. Keep it in the slow cooker on low to keep warm and have a big pot of pasta by the side, so your guests can all help themselves.

Serves 4

| 6 hours on high

1 vegetable stock cube

200ml boiling water

1 onion, finely diced

2 carrots, finely diced

2 celery sticks, finely diced

4 garlic cloves, crushed

2 bay leaves

1 tablespoon tomato purée

1 tablespoon red miso paste

½ teaspoon white sugar

1 x 400g can of chopped tomatoes

1 x 400g can of green lentils, drained

1 x 400g can of butter beans, drained

200ml red wine (I like Malbec)

grating of nutmeg (optional)

splash of olive oil (optional)

salt and black pepper

To serve

300g pasta, cooked to packet instructions

grated parmesan

1. First, dissolve the stock cube in the boiling water. Add the stock with all the remaining ingredients, except the parmesan, to the bowl of your slow cooker, and season with 1 teaspoon of salt and lots of black pepper. Put the lid on and cook on high for 6 hours, until rich and tender. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed.
2. Serve the bolognese stirred through cooked pasta and with tonnes of grated parmesan and a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil.

MY SUGGESTIONS

This is a great way to use ingredients like miso that you wouldn't usually use outside of Asian cooking. Miso is a huge flavour bomb and adds a salty richness that is hard to replicate.

If you want to keep this alcohol-free, then you can sub out the wine for a dark vegetable stock or, ideally, a mushroom stock to keep some umami flavour in there.



VEGGIE CHILLI

Whether it's smothered over nachos, served with fluffy rice or filling a taco shell, this veggie chilli is a delicious way to change up the everyday weekly dinners and try something new. Top tip with chilli: always make too much, so you can have it three different ways throughout the week.

Serves 4

4 hours on high

1 red onion, sliced

300g closed-cup mushrooms, roughly chopped

4 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

2 bay leaves

2 teaspoons ground cumin

2 teaspoons smoked paprika

2 tablespoons chipotle paste

1 teaspoon chilli flakes

2 tablespoons tomato purée

1 tablespoon red miso paste

1 teaspoon dark brown soft sugar

1 vegetable stock cube, crumbled

1 x 400g can of plum tomatoes

2 x 400g cans of butter beans, drained

150ml strong black coffee

20g 70% dark chocolate (optional)

large handful of coriander, leaves roughly chopped

salt and black pepper

1. Add all the ingredients except the chocolate and coriander to the bowl of your slow cooker, then stir everything together and season with 1 teaspoon of salt and plenty of pepper. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours, until rich and tender.
2. Stir in the chocolate (if using), then taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed. Serve scattered with coriander and your accompaniments of choice.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Serve this up with steamed rice, warmed tortillas, quick pickled veg, grated cheddar, soured cream, toasted walnuts (trust me on this one) and a zingy cabbage slaw (see [here](#)).

Dark chocolate is a great addition to a chilli, whether it be veggie, turkey or beef. It adds that extra bit of richness but doesn't make it taste 'chocolate-y'. Miso is also something you want to keep at hand, as it packs a punch of umami whenever you need it.

Don't feel limited to using butter beans in this chilli – if you have a can of kidney beans in the back of the cupboard from 2016 that you've never known what to do with, then this is the perfect time to whip them out. Maybe check the use-by date, though.



VEGGIE FAJITAS

Slow-cooker fajitas are a great dinner to prepare earlier and enjoy later. I was vegetarian for a year-and-a-half just before lockdown, and veggie fajitas became one of our go-to dinners as they were just so easy – and now even easier in the slow cooker!

Serves 4

4 hours on high / + 5 minutes to cook the spinach

4 red peppers, deseeded and thinly sliced

2 red onions, thinly sliced

6 fat garlic cloves, grated or crushed

2 x 280g blocks of firm tofu, drained and cut into 1cm dice

2 x 400g cans of kidney beans, drained

1 tablespoon tomato purée

1 teaspoon ground coriander

1–2 teaspoons cayenne pepper

2 teaspoons smoked paprika

1 teaspoon ground cumin

2 teaspoons chilli sauce

200g baby spinach

salt and black pepper

To serve

4-8 tortillas, warmed

soured cream

lime wedges

zingy slaw (see [here](#))

guacamole (see [here](#))

grated cheddar

thinly sliced red chilli

1. Add the peppers, onions, garlic, tofu, kidney beans, tomato purée, ground coriander, cayenne pepper, smoked paprika, ground cumin and chilli sauce to the bowl of your slow cooker. Season with 1 teaspoon of salt and plenty of pepper and stir everything together. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours, until the vegetables are completely tender. Sit the spinach on the top, then put the lid back on and cook for another 5 minutes, until wilted. Stir it in, then taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed.
2. Serve up with some tortilla wraps, soured cream, lime wedges, slaw, guacamole, grated cheddar and sliced chilli for the whole family to make their own fajitas at the table.

MY SUGGESTIONS

For an easy work lunch, you can get it all prepped with some rice and cheddar in your lunch box and reheat the veggie filling in the office microwave when you're ready for it. All your colleagues will come running to you for the recipe when that delicious smell wafts over to them at their desks.



VEGGIE TACOS

Tacos are great. They are fun food that you can get stuck in with and getting your hands a bit dirty. That's my favourite type of food. Who needs a knife and fork to restrict how much food you can shove in your mouth? I want at least a handful every time.

Serves 4

 4 hours on high

800g chestnut mushrooms, halved

400g shallots, thinly sliced

6 fat garlic cloves, grated or crushed

2 tablespoons white miso paste

2 tablespoons chipotle paste

1 tablespoon chipotle chilli flakes or red chilli flakes

2 teaspoons coriander seeds, crushed

2 teaspoons cumin seeds

salt and black pepper

8 small corn tacos, to serve

1. Add the mushrooms, shallots, garlic, miso, chipotle paste, chilli flakes, coriander seeds, cumin seeds, 1 teaspoon of salt and some black pepper to the bowl of your slow cooker, then stir everything together. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours, until deliciously rich and tender.

2. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed. Serve loaded into the tacos.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Make yourself a delicious slaw to go alongside your veggie tacos – ½ a small shredded red cabbage, 1 grated carrot, 1 thinly sliced red onion, 1 tablespoon of soured cream, 2 tablespoons of mayonnaise (garlic mayo works great for this) and a small handful of chopped chives all mixed together with some lime zest and juice.



VEGGIE HOTPOT

I went all the way to Lancashire to have a hotpot and I can tell you it was worth the journey. The layers of potato, the delicious filling underneath – it was the definition of good, Northern, hearty food. Swap out the meat for some veg and beans and it's just as lovely.

You'll need an ovensafe slow-cooker bowl for this recipe.

Serves 4

4 hours on high / + 10-15 minutes under the grill

2 leeks, cut into 1cm slices

½ celeriac, cut into 2cm dice

2 rosemary sprigs, leaves picked

1 x 400g can of butter beans, drained

3 tablespoons pearl barley

1 teaspoon fennel seeds

1 tablespoon white miso paste

pinch of chilli flakes (optional)

1 vegetable stock cube, crumbled

500g Maris Piper potatoes, cut into 5mm slices

olive oil

salt and black pepper

1. Add the leeks, celeriac, rosemary, butter beans, pearl barley, fennel seeds, miso paste, chilli flakes (if using), crumbled stock cube, ½ teaspoon of salt and plenty of black pepper to the bowl of your slow cooker, and stir everything together.
2. Starting from the outside of the pot and working your way inwards, arrange the slices of potato on top in slightly overlapping layers. Sprinkle over a little salt, then put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours, until the potatoes are completely tender.
3. Preheat the grill (or oven) to high. Remove the pot from the base of slow cooker, then drizzle some olive oil over the potatoes and pop them under the grill for 10–15 minutes, until crisp and golden.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Serve with steamed green vegetables and lots of mustard.

One of my mottos in life is AAC: always add cheese. A little handful of grated cheddar over the top of the potatoes when you pop them under the grill adds that extra bit of salty deliciousness.



STUFFED PEPPERS

Stuffed peppers are one of those dishes that get a bad rep as something you bung in the oven if your vegetarian friend comes over for dinner. They do make a great veggie feasting alternative – but that doesn't mean they have to be boring. Jazz it up with this slow-cooker variety that'll show off just how good a stuffed pep can be.

Serves 4

3 hours on high

300g cherry tomatoes, roughly chopped

2 x 250g packets of cooked Puy lentils

2 lemons, zested and juiced

2–4 tablespoons red or green pesto, to taste

pinch of chilli flakes (optional)

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling

small handful of flat-leaf parsley, leaves roughly chopped

4–6 red peppers

50g almonds, toasted and roughly chopped

small handful of basil, leaves roughly chopped

sea-salt flakes and black pepper

1. Toss together the tomatoes, lentils, lemon zest, pesto, chilli flakes (if using), olive oil and half of the parsley. Season generously with sea-salt flakes and pepper.

2. Slice off the very top of each pepper, keeping the stalk intact, so that you end up with a lid, then scoop out the pith and seeds. Fill each of the peppers with equal amounts of the lentil mixture and put the 'lid' back on. Drizzle with a little olive oil and season the outside with sea-salt flakes.
3. Sit the peppers in the bowl of your slow cooker, put the lid on and cook on high for 3 hours, until completely tender. They should be on the verge of collapsing, but still holding their shape. (I feel like this is a bit of metaphor for life!)
4. Divide the peppers between four serving plates or serve on one large serving dish. Spoon over any juices from the slow cooker, then scatter over the almonds, basil, remaining parsley, a squeeze of lemon juice, if you fancy, and a final drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil.

MY SUGGESTIONS

These peppers are a great addition to your next summer barbecue. They're a delish side dish or vegetarian alternative to the grilled meats. When they're stuffed and cooked, place them gently in an ovenproof dish and pop them on to the barbecue griddle when the heat starts to die down. Close the lid and leave them to reheat while at the same time adding some smoky flavour.



TOMATO AND PANEER CURRY

When I went through my vegetarian era, paneer was my go-to ... for everything. It's a delicious, squeaky-type cheese that can withstand a lot of cooking. It's still very much a staple in my house – and I hope this recipe will make sure it's one in yours, too.

Serves 4

4 hours on high

1 red onion, thinly sliced

4 fat garlic cloves, grated or crushed

2 red peppers, deseeded and cut into 2cm slices

thumb-sized piece of ginger, grated, or peeled and julienned or finely chopped

1-2 green chillies, thinly sliced (or 1-2 teaspoons chilli flakes)

450g paneer, cut into 2-2.5cm dice

25g butter, cubed

1 x 600g jar of passata

1 tablespoon tomato purée

1 teaspoon caster sugar

1 teaspoon garam masala

1 teaspoon cumin seeds

150ml single cream

1 lime, juiced

150–200g spinach

small handful of coriander, stalks finely chopped, leaves roughly chopped

salt and black pepper

1. Add the onion, garlic, peppers, ginger, chillies, paneer, butter, passata, tomato purée, sugar, garam masala and cumin seeds to the bowl of your slow cooker. Season with 1 teaspoon of salt and lots of black pepper. Cook on high for 4 hours, until the veg are completely tender and the paneer is pleasantly soft, but hasn't completely fallen apart.
2. Stir in the cream, lime juice, spinach and coriander stalks, until the spinach has wilted. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed. Divide the curry between four bowls and scatter over the coriander leaves.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Make sure you cut your paneer into big enough chunks so that it doesn't completely fall apart when you cook it.

I love this served with steamed coriander rice, and a flaky bread like a paratha to swipe up all of that sauce. Some extra sliced chilli is good, too, if you fancy.

If you want to make this recipe vegan, you can substitute the paneer for firm tofu and use a plant-based single cream.



VEGGIE COTTAGE PIE

You know when there is mashed potato involved, I'll be happy. And with this dish, I am very, very happy. This is a good one to sneak attack veggies on the kids. If you shout up the stairs to them 'Come down, we've got veggie cottage pie for dinner!', they will probably not be that impressed. A bit like when your mum says there is pizza for dinner and you're expecting a delivery pizza and end up with the one out of the freezer. Instead of announcing it as a 'veggie cottage pie', just serve it up and let them decide for themselves. They'll love it.

Serves 4

4 hours on high / + 10-15 minutes under the grill

For the filling

1 onion, finely chopped

2 carrots, finely chopped

2 celery sticks, finely chopped

4 garlic cloves, grated or crushed

2 teaspoons cumin seeds

2 tablespoons harissa paste

1 x 400g can of Beluga lentils, drained

1 x 400g can of chickpeas, drained

1 vegetable stock cube, crumbled

200g baby spinach
salt and black pepper

For the mashed potato

1kg sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into even-sized pieces
1 tablespoon olive oil or butter

1. Add the onion, carrots, celery, garlic, cumin seeds, harissa paste, lentils, chickpeas, stock cube and 1 teaspoon of salt to the bowl of your slow cooker, then stir to combine. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours, until tender and fragrant. Once cooked, stir in the spinach until wilted, then taste to check the seasoning and adjust with salt and pepper as needed.
2. While the filling is cooking, add the sweet potatoes to a pan of salted water. Bring to a boil over a high heat and cook for 15 minutes, until completely tender, then drain well and mash until smooth. Stir in the olive oil or butter and season to taste with salt.
3. If you're eating this now, preheat the grill (or oven) to high and spoon the mash over the top of the filling in the bowl (if your bowl is oven-safe – otherwise transfer it to an oven-safe dish). Grill for 10–15 minutes, until the potato is crisp and golden.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Some grated cheddar, sprinkled just before grilling, is always a good addition to the top of a cottage pie.

This is a great one to prep ahead of time and freeze. Get everything all assembled into an ovenproof dish or food storage bag, wrap it tightly in

cling film and freeze it for up to 6 months. When you're ready, defrost it in the fridge overnight, then sling it in the oven at 180°C/160°C fan for 30–40 minutes to get it all bubbling and delicious.



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POTATOES.

CONFIT POTATO

Slightly controversial, but if you're low on oven space while cooking your next Sunday roast, evict your potatoes and move them to the slow cooker. What you'll get is a softer and richer spud that will undoubtedly take centre stage. So, make these if you want a carby side that's very simple, very tasty and verrrrry garlicky.

Serves 4–6 as a side

| 5–6 hours on high / 7–8 hours on low / + 10 minutes to caramelise

1kg Charlotte potatoes, halved lengthways

duck fat, ghee, clarified butter or olive oil, to coat

4 thyme sprigs

3 garlic cloves, skin on and bashed

sea-salt flakes and black pepper

1. Get everything in the bowl of your slow cooker with 1 teaspoon of sea-salt flakes and plenty of pepper, and give it all a mix (you may have to use more or less fat, depending on the size of your slow cooker). Put the lid on and cook on high for 5–6 hours or low for 7–8 hours.
2. Once the potatoes are soft enough to poke a knife through, remove them from the fat and get them flat-side down into a frying pan, not overlapping. Place the pan over a medium–high heat and let the potatoes caramelise until golden (around 10 minutes).

MY SUGGESTIONS

You can keep the fat in an airtight container in the fridge and use it again another three or four times before throwing it away (or use it in everyday cooking as an infused fat). Try using different fats, too – you may find one you prefer, like beef, goose or lamb? (Can you even get lamb fat? Maybe ... that would be incredible.)

These potatoes are great served with any meats or poultry. You can add any spices or herbs you like to the confit fat, just make them quite sturdy ones, so that they don't burn or overcook.



MASH

I've done extensive research when it comes to potatoes and believe I know the best methods to create the smoothest, creamiest mash going. There will be no excuses for lumpy, bland mashed potatoes ever again.

I'm also not ashamed to say I have sat and devoured a family-sized portion of mash on more than one occasion. I have a problem.

Serves 4 as a side

| 4 hours on high / 7-8 hours on low

4 large Maris Piper potatoes, peeled and quartered

150ml double cream

100g salted butter, cubed

salt and black pepper

1. Get all your ingredients into the bowl of your slow cooker, season with 1 teaspoon of salt and plenty of black pepper and mix well. Put the lid on and cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 7-8 hours, until the potatoes are completely tender and soft.
2. Use a potato masher or balloon whisk to mash them and fluff them up. Serve right away or keep on low until you're ready to eat.

MY SUGGESTIONS

You can add 200g of grated cheese to this mash after you've mashed it to make it luxuriously cheesy.



FULLY LOADED BABY POTATOES

Anything loaded or stuffed is an immediate winner in my eyes. This recipe gives me classic early 2000s pub-grub-top-tier-buffet-at-your-auntie's-house vibes and I'm all about that. It is perfect for using up any leftover bits of cheese or veg as it's a versatile recipe that you can really play around with.

Serves 6-8

| 5 hours on high / 7-8 hours on low

vegetable oil, for frying

6 rashers of streaky bacon, chopped, or 200g closed-cup mushrooms, chopped

2kg baby potatoes, halved

200g mixed grated cheeses (I like one third each cheddar, mozzarella and red Leicester)

1 onion, finely diced

2 garlic cloves, chopped

50g salted butter, cut into small cubes

salt and black pepper

To serve

tomato ketchup

soured cream

4 spring onions, sliced

1. Lightly oil your frying pan and, depending on what you're using, fry your bacon or mushrooms until cooked and a bit crispy. Set aside.
2. Line the bowl of your slow cooker with foil. Then, layer up one quarter of your potatoes, a quarter of your cheese mixture, a quarter of your bacon or mushrooms, and a quarter each of your onion and garlic. Season with salt and pepper. Repeat the process until you've used everything up, making sure to season in between every layer.
3. Scatter over the butter. Put the lid on and cook on high for 5 hours or on low for 7-8 hours until the potatoes are tender. Top with dollops of tomato ketchup and soured cream, and sprinkle with the sliced spring onions.

MY SUGGESTIONS

These taste like delicious mini potato skins, so instead of the dollops on top at the end, you could serve them up with soured cream in a bowl as well as bowls of American mustard and ketchup. You have to dip them in all three sauces one after the other for the same mouthful ... trust me.



POTATO AND AUBERGINE CURRY

When I was a vegetarian (for all of a year-and-a-half), there were only so many times I could be served yet another ratatouille and pretend to look happy about it. I wanted more variety and, ideally, more than one texture. So up the spice and delight any visiting veggies with this curry. It's a good idea to prep the other ingredients after you've salted the aubergines, to give them time to release their water.

Serves 4

| 4 hours on high

3 aubergines, cut into 2cm dice

500g new potatoes, quartered

2 onions, thinly sliced

thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and grated, julienned or finely chopped

6 garlic cloves, grated or finely chopped

2 teaspoons panch phoron

½ teaspoon ground turmeric

1 teaspoon coriander seeds

1 teaspoon Kashmiri chilli powder

1 teaspoon chilli flakes

1 teaspoon white sugar

1 x 400g can of chopped tomatoes

500ml vegetable stock

splash of olive oil (optional)

large handful of spinach

small handful of coriander, stalks finely chopped, leaves roughly chopped

salt and black pepper

1. Tip your aubergine into a large bowl and toss through 1 teaspoon of salt. Set aside while you prepare the remaining ingredients.
2. Put the potatoes, onions, ginger, garlic, panch phoron, turmeric, coriander seeds, chilli powder, chilli flakes, sugar, chopped tomatoes, stock, olive oil (if using), 1 teaspoon of salt and a good crack of black pepper to the bowl of your slow cooker. Pour off any liquid from the salted aubergine, then stir the aubergine cubes into the vegetables. Cook on high for 4 hours, until the aubergine and potato are completely tender.
3. Stir in the spinach until wilted, then add the coriander stalks. Taste to check the seasoning and adjust as needed. Divide the curry between four bowls and scatter over the coriander leaves.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Serve this with steamed rice or Indian flat breads (naan, chapati or paratha all work).

If you can't get hold of panch phoron, you can swap it out for a mixture of 2 teaspoons of fennel seeds, ½ teaspoon of nigella seeds, ½ teaspoon

of fenugreek seeds and 1 teaspoon of cumin seeds. It's not quite the same, but it'll give you a similar effect.



GARLIC BUTTER POTATO CUBES

Okay, I know this book is mostly about as little prep as possible, but I am the Potato Queen after all. By now, if you follow me online or have my other books, you know how much I love a cubed potato. Chuck them in the slow cooker for a delicious side to any dish.

Serves 4 as a side

| 4-5 hours on high / 7-8 hours on low

1kg King Edward potatoes, peeled and cut into 1cm cubes

50g salted butter

4 garlic cloves, grated

1 teaspoon sweet paprika

1 teaspoon chilli flakes

50ml vegetable stock

salt and black pepper

1. Line the bowl of your slow cooker with foil and add in the potatoes with the butter, garlic, paprika, chilli flakes and stock. Season well and mix everything up.
2. Put the lid on and cook the potatoes on high for 4-5 hours or on low for 7-8 hours, until the cubes are tender.

MY SUGGESTIONS

As well as the garlic butter, you can add 1 tablespoon of runny honey to get a sweet-and-sticky result.

To make them cheesy babies, add 100g of grated mozzarella and 200g of grated mature cheddar (mixed together) in the last hour of cooking, just sprinkling it over the top. This will go gooey and cheesy, ready to serve.



BREAKFAST HOME-STYLE POTATOES

Whoever decided potatoes are good enough for breakfast deserves a medal. I agree – a sneaky breakfast home-style potato is the perfect sustenance to kick your day off the right way. Pop this on low when you go to bed, and the morning will be the best you ever had. (For the record, potatoes should be consumed for lunch, dinner and snacks, too.)

Serves 4 as a side

| 5 hours on high / 7-8 hours on low

1kg King Edward potatoes, peeled and cut into 3cm cubes

1 onion, chopped

1 red pepper, deseeded and cut into 3 pieces

1 green pepper, deseeded and cut into 3 pieces

6 pork sausages, each cut into 4 equal pieces

1 tablespoon tomato purée

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon ground coriander

1 teaspoon light brown soft sugar

1 teaspoon garlic salt

20g salted butter, melted

1. This one's pretty simple: line the bowl of your slow cooker with foil. In a mixing bowl, mix all the ingredients together well, then tip them into the bowl.
2. Put the lid on and cook on high for 5 hours or on low for 7–8 hours. Serve up alongside the rest of your breakfast.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Fry one egg per person to sit right on top of this bad boy. With that, this dish has everything you could need for your breakfast. You can also try using chorizo instead of sausages for a spicier twist.



DAUPHINOISE POTATOES

It's a potato. There's cream. There's garlic. There's nothing more I need to tell you, really. If I were being honest about the serving suggestions for this dish, I'd be saying: 'Eat it with every single dish you make', or: 'Just eat this alone and you'll be more than happy.' Date night: me + a slow-cooker dauphinoise. What more can a gal want?

Serves 4–6 as a side

| 3 hours on high / 6 hours on low / + 5–10 minutes under the grill (optional)

1.5kg King Edward potatoes, peeled and cut into 5mm slices

6 garlic cloves, sliced

600ml double cream

2 thyme sprigs, leaves picked

handful of grated extra-mature cheddar (optional)

sea-salt flakes and black pepper

1. Get the potatoes into the bowl of your slow cooker with the rest of the ingredients and 1 teaspoon of sea-salt flakes and plenty of pepper, and give everything a good mix so that the potatoes are coated in the cream. Just make sure that all the potato slices are flat before you put the lid on. When you're happy, cook on high for 3 hours or on low for 6 hours, until the potatoes are tender enough that the end of a knife goes through and the cream has reduced and thickened up.

2. If you would like to add a crispy top to your dauphinoise and are using an oven-safe slow cooker, heat the grill to medium. Sprinkle over the grated cheese and get those spuds under the grill for 5-10 minutes, until golden and bubbling.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Serve up these potatoes with some pork chops, bacon-wrapped chicken breasts – or, frankly, anything else, because, let's be honest, they go with everything. [Bourguignon?](#) Yes. [Stew?](#) Yes. [Hunter's chicken?](#) Yes.



BOMBAY POTATOES

Maybe it's because I'm the Potato Queen, but I can never have a curry dish or takeaway without ordering a spiced potato dish on the side. These Bombay-spiced slow-cooker potatoes are exactly what you want from a spicy spud. They're full of flavour with the perfect level of spice and a gorgeous texture. Make enough so you can go back for seconds (at least).

Serves 4–6 as a side

| 4 hours on high / 6 hours on low / + 5 minutes for frying

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1 tablespoon mustard seeds

1½ teaspoons garam masala

1½ teaspoons ground turmeric

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon ground coriander

½ teaspoon chilli flakes

1 red onion, thinly sliced

4 large waxy potatoes (such as Charlotte or Melody), peeled and cut into large cubes

1 x 400g can of chopped tomatoes

salt and black pepper

handful of coriander, leaves roughly chopped, to serve

1. In a large frying pan, heat the oil over a medium-high heat. Add in the mustard seeds and get them coated in the oil, then wait until they start to pop. Add the rest of your spices and allow them to toast for 30 seconds.
2. Chuck the sliced onion in with the spices and leave it to cook for 5 minutes or so, until soft.
3. Throw the cubed potatoes in the bowl of your slow cooker with the tomatoes and spiced-up red onion. Season well with salt and pepper, then cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 6 hours, until the potatoes are cooked through but still holding their shape. Serve scattered with the coriander.

MY SUGGESTIONS

These are perfect on the side of any meal, but I love to eat them in a salad made with mango chutney, mint yoghurt, chopped cucumber, chopped tomatoes and smashed poppadoms. It's like a crunchy, soft, spicy bowl of goodness.



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DESSERTS.

HOT CHOCOLATE

Yesss ... you could quickly whip up a hot chocolate on the hob, but will it be as rich and velvety as this bad boy? I think not. Cosy up with this truly decadent treat and make sure you have all the toppings to hand. I'm talking marshmallows, squirty cream, caramel sauce and even a cheeky shot of whisky, if you want a beverage with a buzz.

Serves 4

 2 hours on low

1 litre whole milk or plant-based milk

200g 70% dark chocolate, roughly chopped

1 tablespoon cocoa powder, sifted

2 tablespoons golden caster sugar, to taste

sea-salt flakes

1. Add the milk, chocolate, cocoa powder, half the sugar and a pinch of sea-salt flakes to the slow cooker. Put the lid on and cook on low for 2 hours, until steaming and fragrant. Taste and stir in the remaining sugar, if needed.
2. Froth up the hot choc a little with a mini whisk, if you like, and divide it between four warmed mugs.

MY SUGGESTIONS

This is the most indulgent hot chocolate you will ever have. It is delicious as it is, or you can change it up however you like – add in a bit of spice with some chilli flakes for a Mexican vibe, or make it festive with cinnamon, ginger, cloves and mixed spice. Add in some booze as well to make it a spiked hot chocolate – Baileys, whisky or Cointreau work well.

Then serve it with the toppings. To be honest, they are too important for down here – I've put them in the recipe intro.



MULLED WINE

Mulled wine ... in the slow cooker? It makes so much sense when you think about it! The slow cooker is the perfect vessel for making your mulled wine. If I'm honest, I've just thrown this in so we can have a cheeky drink at the end of the photoshoot days and, unfortunately, I couldn't make a vodka Red Bull recipe work.

Serves 4

2 hours on low

1 x 75cl bottle of red wine (I like Malbec)

2 x 2cm strips of lemon zest

2 x 7cm cinnamon sticks

2-3 star anise, to taste

good grating of nutmeg

about 100g golden caster sugar, to taste (depending on what wine you've used)

8 cloves

1 orange, halved

3-4 shots of brandy (optional)

1. Add the wine, lemon zest, cinnamon, star anise, nutmeg and half of the sugar to the bowl of your slow cooker.

2. Stick the cloves into the skin of each orange half, then add them to the pot.
3. Put the lid on and cook on low for 2 hours, until super fragrant. Pour in the brandy (if using) and taste to see if the mulled wine is sweet enough for you – if not, stir in some more sugar until you're happy.

MY SUGGESTIONS

This is everyone's nan's favourite Christmas tippie, especially with the extra brandy. Make sure you keep it on low so you don't burn off the alcohol, otherwise your nan might not be very happy.

BREAD AND BUTTER PUDDING

Another fine example of British cuisine. This one has, in one form or another, been going strong since the 11th century and I'm pretty sure that nans throughout history are the only ones responsible for passing the recipe down through the generations. The beautifully wobbly and soft interior surrounded by a golden crusty top deserves to make it to your table tonight. Don't forget the extra custard for pouring.

Serves 4

| 1 hour on high / 2 hours on low

For the custard

3 egg yolks

50g golden caster sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla paste, or the seeds from 1 vanilla pod

1 lemon, zested

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

small pinch of salt

250ml whole milk

250ml double cream

For the bread pudding

20g butter

300g slices of day-old bread, quartered into triangles

1 tablespoon demerara sugar

1. To make the custard, whisk together the egg yolks, sugar, vanilla, lemon zest, cinnamon and salt, until the sugar has mostly dissolved, then stir in the milk and cream. Set aside.
2. Generously grease the base and half way up the sides of the slow-cooker bowl with the butter. Lay the bread across the base of the bowl, so the slices are overlapping and at a slight angle – this will give you nice crunchy edges. Pour the custard over the bread, then scatter over the sugar.
3. Place a clean tea towel over the top of the bowl (this will absorb the steam), then put on the slow-cooker lid, stretching the tea towel taut using the exposed edges. Cook on high for 1 hour or on low for 2 hours, until just set and golden. Be careful not to cook it for too long otherwise you'll end up with scrambled eggs.

MY SUGGESTIONS

If you're feeling fancy, change up your bread. I like brioche, but sourdough is also great and adds another depth of flavour. A spoonful of marmalade dropped here and there among the bread would be a lovely addition to add a bit of sweetness.

Serve with double cream, vanilla ice cream or extra custard – or all three!



GLUTEN-FREE BISCOFF-FLAVOURED HOT COOKIE DOUGH WITH CARAMEL SAUCE

Oh, this sounds great, doesn't it? I can't even read the title of this dish without my mouth watering. It's that dish that feels so naughty, but tastes so, so right. Get it in the slow cooker, eat it while hot, dollop on some ice cream, if you fancy.

Serves 4-6

| 3 hours on high / 5 hours on low / + 30 minutes on high to harden the cookie (optional)

110g butter

125g demerara sugar

60g golden caster sugar

1 egg

1 teaspoon vanilla paste

2 tablespoons golden syrup

280g gluten-free plain flour (you can use wheat flour, just remove the xanthan gum from the recipe)

½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

pinch of salt

1 teaspoon xanthan gum

For the caramel sauce

50g caster sugar

½ teaspoon vanilla paste

200ml double cream, warmed

40g butter

pinch of sea-salt flakes

1. Using a stand mixer fitted with the beater attachment or using hand-held electric beaters, cream the butter and both sugars until pale and fluffy. Then beat in the egg, vanilla and golden syrup.
2. In a separate bowl, mix together the dry ingredients (the flour, bicarb, cinnamon, salt and xanthan gum). A third at a time, mix the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients until all combined.
3. Line the bowl of your slow cooker with two wide pieces of baking parchment in a cross shape – this will help you remove the cookie.
4. Get the dough into the bowl of your slow cooker and evenly spread it out a little so the whole of the base is covered. Put the lid on and cook on high for 3 hours or on low for 5 hours, until the dough is cooked but gooey.
5. In the last hour of cooking, make a caramel sauce. Put the caster sugar into a high-sided saucepan over a high heat and leave the sugar to caramelise until it's light golden. Don't mix or stir the sugar – just tilt the pan every now and then to help everything melt evenly. Once it's a very light golden, turn the heat down to low-medium.

6. Mix the vanilla into the warmed cream, then carefully and slowly pour the cream into the sugar pan, whisking continuously. The caramel will bubble, and steam will puff out of it, so use a long whisk if you have one, or put a tea towel over your hand. Mix well until all the cream is incorporated. Remove from the heat and whisk in the butter and flaky salt, until the butter has melted. Set the sauce aside for your cookie later.
7. When the cookie dough is ready, I like to drizzle over the caramel sauce and eat the lot straight from the slow cooker (mainly because I hate washing up), but if you want to serve it on plates, then remove the lid, get the slow cooker on high and leave the cookie dough to harden for around 30 minutes. Then you can use the baking parchment cross to help lift the cookie out of the slow-cooker bowl. Serve it up with the sauce for pouring (re-warm it if you need to).

RICE PUDDING

An absolute school banger. I loved this served up with a dollop of strawberry jam or a sprinkling of brown sugar back in the day. There's a reason rice pudding is beloved worldwide by all ages – it's warming, rich, and nutritious enough that it has remained on school menus since what feels like the beginning of time. (On the other hand: RIP turkey twizzlers. Forever in our hearts.)

Serves 4

3 hours on low

150g pudding rice

3 tablespoons golden caster sugar

500ml whole milk

1 vanilla pod, halved lengthways or 1 teaspoon vanilla paste

1 bay leaf

4cm cinnamon stick

2 cardamom pods, gently bashed

generous pinch of salt

1. Add all the ingredients to the bowl of your slow cooker, along with 500ml of water.
2. Put the lid on and cook on low for 3 hours, stirring once or twice if you can, so that the rice cooks evenly. Season to taste with more

salt, if needed.

MY SUGGESTIONS

If you want the results to be extra creamy, add a splash of double cream with the milk.

As far as I'm concerned, rice pudding always needs a big dollop of jam in the middle, but you don't have to stick to the standard strawberry or raspberry – try something a bit fancier, like damson or cherry.

S'MORES DIPPING BOWL

S'mores are a US import that I can very much get on board with. They were never really a thing here in the UK until recently, but I have it on good authority from my younger (and cooler) brother and sister that s'mores are all the rage now. This is the perfect, fun recipe to try with the kids to keep them distracted and also get them introduced to how to work the slow cooker. S'mores today and who knows? They could be whipping up a chicken chasseur before you know it.

Serves 4

| 30 minutes on low / + 5-10 minutes under the grill or 10-15 minutes on low, to finish

100g 54% dark chocolate, roughly chopped

100g milk chocolate, roughly chopped

1 tablespoon golden syrup

200ml double cream

1-2 tablespoons crunchy peanut butter (optional)

big pinch of sea-salt flakes

200-400g marshmallows (depending how many you want)

180g digestive biscuits (about ½ a standard packet)

1. Add the dark chocolate, milk chocolate, golden syrup, cream, peanut butter (if using) and salt to the bowl of your slow cooker. Stir, then put the lid on and cook on low for 30 minutes, until melted, then stir together so that you have a glossy sauce.

2. While the chocolate sauce is cooking, preheat the grill to high (if you have an oven-safe slow cooker bowl).
3. Scatter the marshmallows over the chocolate sauce, then (if you have an oven-safe slow cooker) transfer the slow-cooker bowl to the grill and cook for 5–10 minutes, until golden and bubbling. If your slow cooker isn't suitable to go under the grill, simply put the lid back on – adding a tea towel under the lid to absorb the steam – and cook for another 10–15 minutes, until the marshmallows are soft but still slightly holding their shape.
4. Grab the biscuits and dive in!

MY SUGGESTIONS

This is a great recipe for a sleepover – kids will go feral for it and it works for the adults, too, with a glass of Baileys on the side.

Add in some peanut butter or orange zest for a kid-friendly twist, or some chilli flakes or espresso powder if the grown-ups are round.



POSH ORANGE CHOCOLATE BRIOCHE BREAD AND BUTTER PUDDING

They didn't have this version in the 11th century (see [here](#)) but give it another 1,000 years and this dinner-party-worthy dessert will be all you'll be serving. A bit nostalgic, a bit modern, but the perfect marriage of both. Ideal for when you've got a mixture of fruit-based or chocolate-based dessert fans. This will keep everyone happy.

Serves 4

| 1 hour on high / 2 hours on low

For the custard

4 egg yolks

65g golden caster sugar

1¼ teaspoons vanilla paste, or the seeds from 1 vanilla pod

1 large orange, zested

small pinch of salt

330ml whole milk

330ml double cream

For the bread pudding

20g butter

300g day-old brioche bread, sliced, or halved lengthways if using brioche rolls

100g 70% dark chocolate, roughly chopped

1 tablespoon demerara sugar

1. To make the custard, whisk together the egg yolks, sugar, vanilla, orange zest and salt, until the sugar has mostly dissolved, then stir in the milk and cream. Set aside.
2. Generously grease the base and half way up the sides of the slow-cooker bowl with the butter. Lay half the brioche across the base of the bowl, then scatter over half of the chocolate, followed by the remaining slices of brioche.
3. Pour the custard over the brioche and scatter over the rest of the chocolate and the demerara sugar. Place a clean tea towel over the top of the bowl (this will absorb the steam), then put the lid on, stretching the tea towel taut using the exposed edges. Cook on high for 1 hour or on low for 2 hours, until just set and golden. Be careful not to cook it for too long otherwise you'll end up with scrambled eggs.

MY SUGGESTIONS

If you're not a fan of dark chocolate, then swap it out for milk or white. White chocolate will add some extra sweetness so I'd recommend slightly less sugar over the top unless you like it sugary.

Serve with double cream, vanilla ice cream or extra custard – or all three!



TREACLE SPONGE

Back in the day we used to whip one of these up in the microwave, but there was always the risk of a few undercooked bits and tough overdone spots, so we're slowing it down. But, don't good things come to those who wait?

Serves 4

 2 hours on high

120g unsalted butter, at room temperature, cubed, plus extra for greasing

120g golden caster sugar

2 eggs

120g self-raising flour, sifted

2 tablespoons whole milk

pinch of salt

1 lemon, zested

3 tablespoons golden syrup, plus optional extra to serve
double cream, to serve

You will need

1-litre pudding basin

kitchen string

1. Grease the pudding basin liberally with butter and line the base with a circle of baking parchment. Set the slow cooker to high, to warm up while you make the pudding mixture.
2. Using a stand mixer fitted with the beater attachment or using hand-held electric beaters, cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. One at a time, beat in the eggs, then carefully fold in the flour, followed by the milk, salt and lemon zest.
3. Put a kettle on to boil and, meanwhile, spoon the golden syrup into the pudding basin, followed by the batter mixture, gently smoothing out the top with the back of a spoon. Cover the basin with a layer of baking parchment and then foil, both larger than the circumference of the basin opening. Make a pleat in the middle so that the pudding can expand. Tie the paper and foil lid tightly under the rim of the basin with kitchen string, to make sure that no steam can get into the pudding.
4. Sit the pudding basin in the bowl of your slow cooker and pour in enough boiling water to come half way up the sides of the basin. Place a clean tea towel over the top of the bowl (this will absorb the steam), then put the lid on, stretching the tea towel taut using the exposed edges. Cook on high for 2 hours, or until a skewer inserted into the middle comes out clean.
5. Turn off the heat and let the pudding stand for 10 minutes, then remove the basin from the slow cooker, remove the foil and paper and loosen the sides of the sponge with a palette knife. Turn out the pudding on to a plate and serve with extra warmed golden syrup (if you like) and double cream.

MY SUGGESTIONS

When you add the golden syrup, you can whack in a spoonful of raspberry jam, but I'd recommend using 2 tablespoons of syrup and 1 tablespoon of jam, otherwise you might end up with a bit of a soggy pudding (oo-er).



STICKY TOFFEE PUDDING

Get this syrupy and sticky triumph down ya and tell me it's not one of the best puds to grace this Earth? There's a reason nearly every single wedding I've been to has served this for dessert. So, crank up 'Canon in D' and parade this beauty down the aisle.

Serves 4

| 2 hours on high

For the sauce

75g unsalted butter, cubed, plus extra for greasing

100g light brown soft sugar (dark muscovado works, too)

1 heaped teaspoon black treacle

300ml double cream

sea-salt flakes

For the sponge

200g pitted dates, roughly chopped

200ml boiling water

1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

75g unsalted butter, cubed

50g light brown soft sugar

2 tablespoons black treacle

2 eggs

150g plain flour, sifted

2 teaspoons baking powder

pinch of salt

You will need

1-litre pudding basin

kitchen string

1. Grease the pudding basin liberally with butter and line the base with a circle of baking parchment.
2. Make the sauce. Add the butter, sugar and treacle to a saucepan set over a low heat and stir until melted. Stir in the cream and bring to a simmer, then remove from the heat and set aside.
3. Set the slow cooker to high to warm up while you make the pudding mixture. Combine the dates, boiling water and bicarbonate of soda in a heatproof bowl and leave to stand for about 10 minutes.
4. Using a stand mixer fitted with the beater attachment or using hand-held electric beaters, cream the butter, sugar and treacle until light and fluffy. One at a time, beat in the eggs, then gently fold in the flour, baking powder and salt.
5. Roughly squash the rehydrated dates with a fork – or in a food processor – and fold them into the batter.
6. Pour the batter into the pudding basin. There should be around a 5cm gap at the top. Cover the basin with a layer of baking parchment and then foil, both larger than the circumference of the basin opening. Make a pleat in the middle so that the pudding can

expand. Tie the paper and foil lid tightly under the rim of the basin with kitchen string.

7. Sit the pudding basin in the bowl of your slow cooker and pour in enough boiling water to come half way up the side of the basin. Place a clean tea towel over the top of the bowl (this will absorb the steam), then put the lid on, stretching the tea towel taut using the exposed edges. Cook on high for 2 hours, or until a skewer inserted into the middle comes out clean.
8. Turn off the heat and let the pudding stand for 10 minutes – while you're waiting, gently warm up the sauce – then remove the basin from the slow cooker, remove the foil and paper and loosen the sides of the pudding with a palette knife. Turn out the pudding on to a plate and serve with the warmed sauce. It's also great served with double cream, vanilla ice cream or custard – or all three!



APPLE CRUMBLE

Ahh, crimble crumble! A British staple. If you're not ending your Sunday roast with an apple crumble and custard, what are you doing? Lather it up with classic custard and you are on to an absolute winner.

Serves 4

3 hours on low / + 10-15 minutes in the oven to crisp the crumble (optional)

For the filling

6 cooking apples, peeled, cored and cut into 2cm dice

½ lemon, juiced

60g light brown soft sugar

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

For the crumble

150g unsalted butter, cubed

225g plain flour, sifted

75g jumbo oats

75g light brown soft sugar

pinch of sea-salt flakes

1. To make the filling, add the apples, lemon juice, sugar and cinnamon to the bowl of your slow cooker and toss together. Set

aside.

2. Make the crumble. Add the butter and flour to a mixing bowl and rub together, using your hands, until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Stir in the oats, sugar and salt, then add 2 tablespoons of water and gently shake the bowl back and forth so that a few larger lumps of crumble form. Scatter the crumble evenly over the apple mixture.
3. Place a clean tea towel over the top of the bowl (this will absorb the steam), then put the lid on, stretching the tea towel taut using the exposed edges. Cook on low for 3 hours, until golden and bubbling.
4. You can eat the crumble straight away, or if you'd like to get a bit of crunch on the topping, heat your oven to 200°C/180°C fan. Remove the lid (and tea towel) from the bowl of your slow cooker and (assuming it's ovenproof) transfer it to the oven to cook for 10-15 minutes.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Add to your crumble mixture! I sometimes like a bit of ground cinnamon or ground ginger, or some flaked toasted almonds, lightly crushed walnuts or seeds to make things a bit more exciting.

Serve with custard, ice cream, double cream – or all three!



BANANA BREAD

This is now my third book and this banana bread will be the third recipe dedicated to my best friend of 27 years – Martha. In book one, I dedicated my peanut-butter-and-banana French toast recipe to her. In my second book, the banana fritters recipe was all for her. And this time – a delicious banana bread for my best friend. Why? Does she love bananas? No, actually, she has had an uncontrollable fear of bananas since birth. Like she can't even go near one. It's funny because she'll struggle to even look at this page. Shame, really, because this banana bread recipe is delicious.

Serves 6–8

 3 hours on high

knob of butter, for greasing

4 ripe bananas, peeled and roughly chopped

150ml vegetable oil

2 teaspoons vanilla extract (optional)

140g light brown soft sugar

2 eggs

160g self-raising flour, sifted

1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

½ teaspoon baking powder

pinch of salt

100g 70% dark chocolate or 100g walnuts, roughly chopped (optional)
1 tablespoon demerara sugar (optional)

You will need

900g loaf tin

1. Set the slow cooker to high to warm up while you make the cake batter. Grease the loaf tin and line it with baking parchment.
2. Add the bananas, oil, vanilla (if using) and sugar to a food processor or the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the beater attachment and blitz briefly to combine. One at a time, add the eggs and whizz again between each addition.
3. Add the flour, bicarbonate of soda, baking powder, salt and chocolate or walnuts (if using) and blitz very briefly, until just combined.
4. Pour the mixture into the loaf tin, sprinkle over the demerara sugar (if using) and sit the tin in the bowl of your slow cooker.
5. Boil the kettle and pour in enough water to come half way up the sides of the tin. Place a tea towel over the slow-cooker bowl and put the lid on, stretching the towel taut using the exposed edges. Cook on high for 3 hours, until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.
6. Remove the tin from the slow cooker and leave the banana loaf to cool a little. Then, turn it out on to a wire rack and leave it to cool completely before slicing.

MY SUGGESTIONS

This is a great way to use up those bananas on the side that you bought because you ‘wanted to start taking fruit to work’, but then forgot. We’ve all done it, and at least it makes it possible for you to make this banana bread, which you definitely won’t forget to take to work with you so you can show off your baking prowess with a cup of tea with Sandra, who thinks she’s the office baker.



CHOCOLATE LAVA CAKE

There's a reason the chocolate lava cake went super-viral. It's essentially a giant chocolate fondant that oozes gooey rich chocolate that I could literally swim in. I'm now envisioning a bubbling chocolatey hot tub and I'm in pure heaven. Sharing is optional. When I thoroughly tested this recipe, I did it alone and had no leftovers, so there's no judgement here.

Serves 4-6

2 hours on high

200g unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing

200g 70% dark chocolate, roughly chopped

100g light brown soft sugar

3 eggs

30g flour, sifted

big pinch of sea-salt flakes

cocoa powder, sifted, for dusting

You will need

1-litre pudding basin

kitchen string

1. Set the slow cooker to high, to warm up while you prepare the ingredients. Boil the kettle.

2. Melt the butter and half the chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of just simmering water, then remove from the heat and set aside to cool.
3. Using a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment or with a hand-held electric whisk, whisk together the sugar and eggs until pale and fluffy, then fold in the flour and sea-salt flakes.
4. Grease the pudding basin really well with butter and dust it with cocoa powder. Pour half of the mixture into the basin, then add the remaining chocolate in a small pile in the middle and cover with the remaining mixture. Cover the basin with a layer of baking parchment and then foil, both larger than the circumference of the basin opening. Make a pleat in the middle so that the pudding can expand. Tie the paper and foil lid tightly under the rim of the basin with kitchen string, to make sure that no steam can get into the pudding.
5. Sit the pudding basin in the slow cooker and pour in enough boiling water to come half way up the side. Put the lid on and cook on high for 2 hours, until set around the edges but still wobbly in the middle. Remove the basin from the slow cooker, remove the foil and paper and loosen around the edges of the basin with a small knife before carefully turning out the onto a plate to serve.

MY SUGGESTIONS

Make sure you grease your pudding basin really well! If this one sticks it will completely fall apart and the gooey middle will go everywhere. It'll still be tasty but just won't look the part. Add a grating of fresh orange zest if you fancy a little chocolate-orange situation.

Serve with double cream, vanilla ice cream or crème fraîche.



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[Index](#)

A

ale: beef stew [here](#)

almonds

 chicken korma [here](#)

 stuffed peppers [here](#)

ancho chilli paste: birria-inspired turkey tacos [here](#)

anchovies

 beef short ribs [here](#)

 chorizo peperonata [here](#)

 roast lamb with potatoes [here](#)

apples

 apple crumble [here](#)

 overnight apple and cider pork bap [here](#)

apricots: harissa lamb tagine [here](#)

Asian-style turkey mince [here](#)

aubergines: potato and aubergine curry [here](#)

B

bacon

 beef stew [here](#)

 fully loaded baby potatoes [here](#)

 honey-glazed pigs in blankets [here](#)

 hunter's chicken [here](#)

banana bread [here](#)

baps

 overnight apple and cider pork bap [here](#)

pulled turkey buns [here](#)
basil: chicken pesto pasta [here](#)
BBQ pork ribs [here](#)
bean sprouts: laksa [here](#)
beans
 chilli con carne [here](#)
 chipotle bean soup [here](#)
 chorizo, goat's cheese and butter bean soup [here](#)
 'nduja and cannellini bean soup [here](#)
 sausage casserole [here](#)
 turkey mince chilli [here](#)
 veggie Bolognese [here](#)
 veggie chilli [here](#)
 veggie fajitas [here](#)
 veggie hotpot [here](#)
beef [here](#)–[here](#)
 beef bourguignon [here](#)
 beef joint and gravy [here](#)
 beef rendang [here](#)
 beef short ribs [here](#)
 beef stew [here](#)
 beef stroganoff [here](#)
 beef tacos [here](#)
 chilli con carne [here](#)
 pork and beef meatballs [here](#)
 spaghetti Bolognese [here](#)
Beluga lentils: veggie cottage pie [here](#)
birria-inspired turkey tacos [here](#)
Biscoff: gluten-free hot cookie dough with caramel sauce [here](#)
Bolognese

spaghetti Bolognese [here](#)

veggie Bolognese [here](#)

Bombay potatoes [here](#)

borlotti beans: chipotle bean soup [here](#)

brandy: mulled wine [here](#)

bread

bread and butter pudding [here](#)

French onion soup [here](#)

overnight apple and cider pork bap [here](#)

bread and butter pudding [here](#)

posh orange chocolate brioche bread and butter pudding [here](#)

breakfast home-style potatoes [here](#)

brioche

posh orange chocolate brioche bread and butter pudding [here](#)

pulled turkey buns [here](#)

broccoli and cheese soup [here](#)

buffalo chicken [here](#)

butter

flavoured butter [here](#)

garlic butter potato cubes [here](#)

butter beans

chilli con carne [here](#)

chorizo, goat's cheese and butter bean soup [here](#)

veggie Bolognese [here](#)

veggie chilli [here](#)

veggie hotpot [here](#)

butternut squash

chipotle bean soup [here](#)

spiced butternut squash soup [here](#)

C

cabbage: spicy gochujang noodle soup [here](#)

cakes

banana bread [here](#)

chocolate lava cake [here](#)

cannellini beans

chipotle bean soup [here](#)

'nduja and cannellini bean soup [here](#)

sausage casserole [here](#)

capers

chorizo peperonata [here](#)

puttanesca [here](#)

roast lamb with potatoes [here](#)

caramel: gluten-free Biscoff-flavoured hot cookie dough with caramel sauce [here](#)

caraway seeds: carrot and caraway soup [here](#)

cardamom: rice pudding [here](#)

carrots

beef bourguignon [here](#)

beef joint and gravy [here](#)

beef short ribs [here](#)

beef stew [here](#)

carrot and caraway soup [here](#)

Grandma Pat's rolled lamb breast [here](#)

harissa lamb tagine [here](#)

hearty whole chicken soup [here](#)

lamb ragù [here](#)

shepherd's pie [here](#)

spaghetti Bolognese [here](#)

turkey casserole and dumplings [here](#)

veggie Bolognese [here](#)
veggie cottage pie [here](#)
casseroles and stews beef stew [here](#)
chorizo peperonata [here](#)
sausage casserole [here](#)
turkey casserole and dumplings [here](#)
see *also* tagines
cavolo nero
chipotle bean soup [here](#)
'nduja and cannellini bean soup [here](#)
sausage casserole [here](#)
celeriac: veggie hotpot [here](#)
char siu pork [here](#)
cheese
birria-inspired turkey tacos [here](#)
broccoli and cheese soup [here](#)
chicken pesto pasta [here](#)
chorizo, goat's cheese and butter bean soup [here](#)
dauphinoise potatoes [here](#)
French onion soup [here](#)
fully loaded baby potatoes [here](#)
hunter's chicken [here](#)
'marry me' chicken [here](#)
mushroom risotto [here](#)
Parmesan potatoes and chicken [here](#)
pulled turkey buns [here](#)
tomato and paneer curry [here](#)
chicken [here](#)–[here](#)
buffalo chicken [here](#)
chicken and chorizo orzo [here](#)

chicken korma [here](#)

chicken pesto pasta [here](#)

chicken tikka masala [here](#)

coq au vin [here](#)

fajita chicken [here](#)

hearty whole chicken soup [here](#)

honey garlic chicken thighs [here](#)

hunter's chicken [here](#)

'marry me' chicken [here](#)

Parmesan potatoes and chicken [here](#)

spicy gochujang noodle soup [here](#)

teriyaki chicken [here](#)

Thai red curry [here](#)

chickpeas

harissa lamb tagine [here](#)

peanut satay curry [here](#)

tofu curry [here](#)

veggie cottage pie [here](#)

chillies

beef rendang [here](#)

birria-inspired turkey tacos [here](#)

chilli con carne [here](#)

laksa [here](#)

ramen [here](#)

Thai red curry [here](#)

tomato and paneer curry [here](#)

turkey mince chilli [here](#)

veggie chilli [here](#)

Chinese cabbage: spicy gochujang noodle soup [here](#)

Chinese five spice: char siu pork [here](#)

chipotle paste

beef tacos [here](#)

birria-inspired turkey tacos [here](#)

chilli con carne [here](#)

chipotle bean soup [here](#)

veggie chilli [here](#)

veggie tacos [here](#)

chocolate

banana bread [here](#)

chocolate lava cake [here](#)

hot chocolate [here](#)

posh orange chocolate brioche bread and butter pudding [here](#)

s'mores dipping bowl [here](#)

chorizo

chicken and chorizo orzo [here](#)

chorizo, goat's cheese and butter bean soup [here](#)

chorizo peperonata [here](#)

cider: overnight apple and cider pork bap [here](#)

cinnamon

apple crumble [here](#)

birria-inspired turkey tacos [here](#)

gluten-free Biscoff-flavoured hot cookie dough with caramel sauce
[here](#)

mulled wine [here](#)

rice pudding [here](#)

cloves: mulled wine [here](#)

coconut cream: chicken tikka masala [here](#)

coconut milk

beef rendang [here](#)

laksa [here](#)

peanut satay curry [here](#)

spiced butternut squash soup [here](#)

Thai red curry [here](#)

tofu curry [here](#)

coffee

chilli con carne [here](#)

veggie chilli [here](#)

confit potato [here](#)

cookie dough: gluten-free Biscoff-flavoured hot cookie dough with
caramel sauce [here](#)

coq au vin [here](#)

corn-on-the-cobs: hearty whole chicken soup [here](#)

cottage pie, veggie [here](#)

cream

bread and butter pudding [here](#)

dauphinoise potatoes [here](#)

gluten-free Biscoff-flavoured hot cookie dough with caramel sauce
[here](#)

‘marry me’ chicken [here](#)

mash [here](#)

posh orange chocolate brioche bread and butter pudding [here](#)

s’mores dipping bowl [here](#)

sticky toffee pudding [here](#)

crumble, apple [here](#)

curry

beef rendang [here](#)

chicken korma [here](#)

chicken tikka masala [here](#)

laksa [here](#)

peanut satay curry [here](#)

potato and aubergine curry [here](#)
Thai red curry [here](#)
tofu curry [here](#)
tomato and paneer curry [here](#)
curry leaves: tofu curry [here](#)
custard
bread and butter pudding [here](#)
posh orange chocolate brioche bread and butter pudding [here](#)

D

dates: sticky toffee pudding [here](#)
dauphinoise potatoes [here](#)
desserts [here](#)-[here](#)
apple crumble [here](#)
banana bread [here](#)
bread and butter pudding [here](#)
chocolate lava cake [here](#)
gluten-free Biscoff-flavoured hot cookie dough with caramel sauce
[here](#)
posh orange chocolate brioche bread and butter pudding [here](#)
rice pudding [here](#)
s'mores dipping bowl [here](#)
sticky toffee pudding [here](#)
treacle sponge [here](#)
dhal, tomato and spinach [here](#)
digestive biscuits: s'mores dipping bowl [here](#)
Dijon mustard: beef stroganoff [here](#)
dipping bowl, s'mores [here](#)
drinks
hot chocolate [here](#)

mulled wine [here](#)
dumplings, turkey casserole and [here](#)

E

eggs
bread and butter pudding [here](#)
breakfast home-style potatoes [here](#)

F

fajitas
fajita chicken [here](#)
veggie fajitas [here](#)
fennel: Grandma Pat's rolled lamb breast [here](#)
Frank's hot sauce: buffalo chicken [here](#)
French onion soup [here](#)
fully loaded baby potatoes [here](#)

G

gammon: sweet honey and mustard ham [here](#)
garam masala: tofu curry [here](#)
garlic
beef joint and gravy [here](#)
beef stroganoff [here](#)
birria-inspired turkey tacos [here](#)
char siu pork [here](#)
chilli con carne [here](#)
dauphinoise potatoes [here](#)
garlic butter potato cubes [here](#)
Grandma Pat's rolled lamb breast [here](#)

honey garlic chicken thighs [here](#)
Jack Daniel's pork [here](#)
'marry me' chicken [here](#)
pork and beef meatballs [here](#)
potato and aubergine curry [here](#)
pulled pork [here](#)
roast lamb with potatoes [here](#)
turkey breast [here](#)
veggie fajitas [here](#)
veggie tacos [here](#)
gluten-free Biscoff-flavoured hot cookie dough with caramel sauce [here](#)
goat's cheese: chorizo, goat's cheese and butter bean soup [here](#)
gochujang chilli paste: spicy gochujang noodle soup [here](#)
Grandma Pat's rolled lamb breast [here](#)
gravy, beef joint and [here](#)
green beans: laksa [here](#)
Gruyère: French onion soup [here](#)

H

ham, sweet honey and mustard [here](#)
harissa paste harissa lamb tagine [here](#)
veggie cottage pie [here](#)
hearty whole chicken soup [here](#)
hoisin sauce: char siu pork [here](#)
honey
honey garlic chicken thighs [here](#)
honey-glazed pigs in blankets [here](#)
sweet honey and mustard ham [here](#)
hot chocolate [here](#)
hotpot, veggie [here](#)

hunter's chicken [here](#)

J

Jack Daniel's pork [here](#)

K

kale: peanut satay curry [here](#)

ketchup

hunter's chicken [here](#)

pulled turkey buns [here](#)

kidney beans

chilli con carne [here](#)

turkey mince chilli [here](#)

veggie fajitas [here](#)

korma, chicken [here](#)

L

lager: pulled pork [here](#)

laksa [here](#)

lamb [here](#)–[here](#)

Grandma Pat's rolled lamb breast [here](#)

harissa lamb tagine [here](#)

lamb ragù [here](#)

lamb shanks [here](#)

roast lamb with potatoes [here](#)

shepherd's pie [here](#)

leeks

chorizo, goat's cheese and butter bean soup [here](#)

mushroom risotto [here](#)

turkey casserole and dumplings [here](#)

veggie hotpot [here](#)

lemons

flavoured butter [here](#)

stuffed peppers [here](#)

lentils

carrot and caraway soup [here](#)

stuffed peppers [here](#)

tomato and spinach dhal [here](#)

veggie Bolognese [here](#)

veggie cottage pie [here](#)

M

maple syrup: Jack Daniel's pork [here](#)

'marry me' chicken [here](#)

marshmallows: s'mores dipping bowl [here](#)

mash [here](#)

meatballs, pork and beef [here](#)

milk

hot chocolate [here](#)

rice pudding [here](#)

miso paste

ramen [here](#)

spicy gochujang noodle soup [here](#)

veggie Bolognese [here](#)

veggie chilli [here](#)

veggie hotpot [here](#)

veggie tacos [here](#)

mozzarella

birria-inspired turkey tacos [here](#)

chicken pesto pasta [here](#)
fully loaded baby potatoes [here](#)
mulled wine [here](#)
mushrooms
beef bourguignon [here](#)
beef stroganoff [here](#)
coq au vin [here](#)
fully loaded baby potatoes [here](#)
mushroom risotto [here](#)
mushroom soup [here](#)
teriyaki chicken [here](#)
Thai red curry [here](#)
veggie chilli [here](#)
veggie tacos [here](#)
mustard
beef stroganoff [here](#)
sweet honey and mustard ham [here](#)

N

'nduja and cannellini bean soup [here](#)
noodles
laksa [here](#)
ramen [here](#)
spicy gochujang noodle soup [here](#)

O

oats: apple crumble [here](#)
olives: puttanesca [here](#)
onions: French onion soup [here](#)
oranges

flavoured butter [here](#)
mulled wine [here](#)
posh orange chocolate brioche bread and butter pudding [here](#)
orzo, chicken and chorizo [here](#)
overnight apple and cider pork bap [here](#)

P

pancetta
beef bourguignon [here](#)
coq au vin [here](#)
lamb ragù [here](#)
paneer: tomato and paneer curry [here](#)
pappardelle: lamb ragù [here](#)
Parmesan
chicken pesto pasta [here](#)
'marry me' chicken [here](#)
mushroom risotto [here](#)
Parmesan potatoes and chicken [here](#)
pasta
chicken and chorizo orzo [here](#)
chicken pesto pasta [here](#)
lamb ragù [here](#)
'nduja and cannellini bean soup [here](#)
pork and beef meatballs [here](#)
puttanesca [here](#)
spaghetti Bolognese [here](#)
veggie Bolognese [here](#)
peanut butter
peanut satay curry [here](#)
s'mores dipping bowl [here](#)

pearl barley: veggie hotpot [here](#)

peas

Asian-style turkey mince [here](#)

mushroom risotto [here](#)

turkey casserole and dumplings [here](#)

peperonata, chorizo [here](#)

peppers

breakfast home-style potatoes [here](#)

chilli con carne [here](#)

chorizo peperonata [here](#)

fajita chicken [here](#)

roasted tomato soup [here](#)

stuffed peppers [here](#)

tomato and paneer curry [here](#)

veggie fajitas [here](#)

pesto

chicken pesto pasta [here](#)

stuffed peppers [here](#)

pie

shepherd's pie [here](#)

veggie cottage pie [here](#)

pigs in blankets, honey-glazed [here](#)

pine nuts: chicken pesto pasta [here](#)

pineapple: Jack Daniel's pork [here](#)

pineapple juice: pulled turkey buns [here](#)

pork [here](#)–[here](#)

BBQ pork ribs [here](#)

breakfast home-style potatoes [here](#)

char siu pork [here](#)

chorizo peperonata [here](#)

honey-glazed pigs in blankets [here](#)
Jack Daniel's pork [here](#)
overnight apple and cider pork bap [here](#)
pork and beef meatballs [here](#)
pulled pork [here](#)
sausage casserole [here](#)
spaghetti Bolognese [here](#)
sweet honey and mustard ham [here](#)
posh orange chocolate brioche bread and butter pudding [here](#)
potatoes [here](#)–[here](#)
beef stew [here](#)
Bombay potatoes [here](#)
breakfast home-style potatoes [here](#)
confit potato [here](#)
dauphinoise potatoes [here](#)
fully loaded baby potatoes [here](#)
garlic butter potato cubes [here](#)
hearty whole chicken soup [here](#)
mash [here](#)
Parmesan potatoes and chicken [here](#)
potato and aubergine curry [here](#)
roast lamb with potatoes [here](#)
shepherd's pie [here](#)
turkey casserole and dumplings [here](#)
veggie hotpot [here](#)
see also sweet potatoes
pulled pork [here](#)
pulled turkey buns [here](#)
puttanesca [here](#)
Puy lentils: stuffed peppers [here](#)

R

ragù, lamb [here](#)

ramen [here](#)

red kidney beans

chilli con carne [here](#)

turkey mince chilli [here](#)

veggie fajitas [here](#)

red lentils: tomato and spinach dhal [here](#)

red miso paste

spicy gochujang noodle soup [here](#)

veggie Bolognese [here](#)

veggie chilli [here](#)

red wine

beef bourguignon [here](#)

beef joint and gravy [here](#)

beef short ribs [here](#)

lamb ragù [here](#)

lamb shanks [here](#)

mulled wine [here](#)

sausage casserole [here](#)

spaghetti Bolognese [here](#)

veggie Bolognese [here](#)

rendang, beef [here](#)

rice

mushroom risotto [here](#)

rice pudding [here](#)

risotto, mushroom [here](#)

S

satay: peanut satay curry [here](#)

sausages

breakfast home-style potatoes [here](#)

honey-glazed pigs in blankets [here](#)

sausage casserole [here](#)

see *also* chorizo

shallots

beef bourguignon [here](#)

beef stew [here](#)

coq au vin [here](#)

Jack Daniel's pork [here](#)

veggie tacos [here](#)

shepherd's pie [here](#)

shiitake mushrooms: teriyaki chicken [here](#)

smoky barbecue sauce: BBQ pork ribs [here](#)

s'mores dipping bowl [here](#)

soups [here](#)–[here](#)

broccoli and cheese soup [here](#)

carrot and caraway soup [here](#)

chipotle bean soup [here](#)

chorizo, goat's cheese and butter bean soup [here](#)

French onion soup [here](#)

hearty whole chicken soup [here](#)

laksa [here](#)

mushroom soup [here](#)

'nduja and cannellini bean soup [here](#)

ramen [here](#)

roasted tomato soup [here](#)

spiced butternut squash soup [here](#)

spicy gochujang noodle soup [here](#)

soured cream: beef stroganoff [here](#)

spaghetti

pork and beef meatballs [here](#)

puttanesca [here](#)

spaghetti Bolognese [here](#)

veggie Bolognese [here](#)

spiced butternut squash soup [here](#)

spicy gochujang noodle soup [here](#)

spinach

chicken and chorizo orzo [here](#)

potato and aubergine curry [here](#)

tomato and paneer curry [here](#)

tomato and spinach dhal [here](#)

veggie cottage pie [here](#)

veggie fajitas [here](#)

spring onions: teriyaki chicken [here](#)

squash

chipotle bean soup [here](#)

spiced butternut squash soup [here](#)

star anise: mulled wine [here](#)

stews and casseroles

beef stew [here](#)

chorizo peperonata [here](#)

sausage casserole [here](#)

turkey casserole and dumplings [here](#)

see *also* tagines

sticky toffee pudding [here](#)

Stilton: broccoli and cheese soup [here](#)

stroganoff, beef [here](#)

stuffed peppers [here](#)

sugar snap peas

hearty whole chicken soup [here](#)
teriyaki chicken [here](#)
tofu curry [here](#)
swede: turkey casserole and dumplings [here](#)
sweet honey and mustard ham [here](#)
sweet potatoes
peanut satay curry [here](#)
veggie cottage pie [here](#)
sweet teriyaki sauce: Jack Daniel's pork [here](#)

T

tacos
beef tacos [here](#)
birria-inspired turkey tacos [here](#)
veggie tacos [here](#)
tagine, harissa lamb [here](#)
teriyaki
Jack Daniel's pork [here](#)
teriyaki chicken [here](#)
Thai red curry [here](#)
tikka masala, chicken [here](#)
toffee: sticky toffee pudding [here](#)
tofu
ramen [here](#)
tofu curry [here](#)
veggie fajitas [here](#)
tomato chutney: Jack Daniel's pork [here](#)
tomato ketchup hunter's chicken [here](#)
pulled turkey buns [here](#)
tomatoes

beef short ribs [here](#)
beef tacos [here](#)
birria-inspired turkey tacos [here](#)
Bombay potatoes [here](#)
chicken pesto pasta [here](#)
chicken tikka masala [here](#)
chilli con carne [here](#)
chorizo, goat's cheese and butter bean soup [here](#)
chorizo peperonata [here](#)
harissa lamb tagine [here](#)
lamb ragù [here](#)
'marry me' chicken [here](#)
'nduja and cannellini bean soup [here](#)
pork and beef meatballs [here](#)
potato and aubergine curry [here](#)
pulled pork [here](#)
puttanesca [here](#)
roasted tomato soup [here](#)
spaghetti Bolognese [here](#)
stuffed peppers [here](#)
tofu curry [here](#)
tomato and paneer curry [here](#)
tomato and spinach dhal [here](#)
turkey mince chilli [here](#)
veggie Bolognese [here](#)
veggie chilli [here](#)
tortilla chips
 chilli con carne [here](#)
 fajita chicken [here](#)
tortilla wraps

veggie chilli [here](#)
veggie fajitas [here](#)
treacle sponge [here](#)
turkey [here](#)–[here](#)
Asian-style turkey mince [here](#)
birria-inspired turkey tacos [here](#)
pulled turkey buns [here](#)
turkey breast [here](#)
turkey casserole and dumplings [here](#)
turkey mince chilli [here](#)

V

vanilla
banana bread [here](#)
bread and butter pudding [here](#)
rice pudding [here](#)
veggie [here](#)–[here](#)
mushroom risotto [here](#)
peanut satay curry [here](#)
puttanesca [here](#)
stuffed peppers [here](#)
tofu curry [here](#)
tomato and paneer curry [here](#)
tomato and spinach dahl [here](#)
veggie Bolognese [here](#)
veggie chilli [here](#)
veggie cottage pie [here](#)
veggie fajitas [here](#)
veggie hotpot [here](#)
veggie tacos [here](#)

W

walnuts: banana bread [here](#)

white miso paste

spicy gochujang noodle soup [here](#)

veggie hotpot [here](#)

veggie tacos [here](#)

white wine

mushroom risotto [here](#)

sausage casserole [here](#)

wine

beef bourguignon [here](#)

beef joint and gravy [here](#)

beef short ribs [here](#)

coq au vin [here](#)

lamb ragù [here](#)

lamb shanks [here](#)

mulled wine [here](#)

mushroom risotto [here](#)

sausage casserole [here](#)

spaghetti Bolognese [here](#)

veggie Bolognese [here](#)

Worcestershire sauce:

BBQ pork ribs [here](#)

Thank you

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Thanks, Poppy

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About Poppy.

Poppy has spent a decade in professional kitchens – ranging from Michelin-starred restaurants and fine-dining experiences to serving tasty everyday food. In March 2020, while working as a junior sous chef at an exclusive members' club, the Covid-19 pandemic hit and she lost her job. She turned to TikTok as a creative outlet, and her entertaining and educational content led to more than a million followers in just over seven months. She shares the skills she's learned from her time in the restaurant industry to inspire and teach people how to cook at home, from the basics, right up to achievable restaurant-quality food – as well as a potato or two.

Poppy published her first book, *Poppy Cooks: The Food You Need*, in 2021, followed in 2023 by the *Sunday Times* best-selling *Poppy Cooks: The Actually Delicious Air Fryer Cookbook*. She has been a judge on E4's *Celebrity Cooking School* and the BBC's *Young Masterchef* and is a chef-mentor on ITV's *Cooking with the Stars*.

Poppy lives in Birmingham with her fiancé and two dogs.

Find Poppy [@poppycooks](#) on TikTok and [@poppy_cooks](#) on Instagram.

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