

There are hundreds of texts, treatises and yoga books and possibly many hundreds more on cookery, so why another one? Neither one nor the other, Kitchen Yoga is a synthesis designed to re-awaken and nourish an innate human response to natural foods by blending practicalities with philosophy.

Because yoga is ubiquitous it cannot be captured, codified or described adequately in words. Any attempt to do so could only ever be a partial explanation or description of the single reality, the one truth that comprises wholeness. Thus, road-building yoga, astrophysics yoga, fishing yoga, dancing yoga – each, in its own way, is as valid as kitchen yoga. That I have chosen the kitchen as a context derives solely out of a personal fascination with our complex inter-relationship with our basic support system: food. The emphasis in Kitchen Yoga is as much about our attitudes and relationship to food, as about what we eat or how we cook.

## INTRODUCTION

I was born to a mother who would not cook. She demonstrated a disdain for food in general and mealtimes in particular. She would sigh, frequently, “If only someone would invent a pill....!” Her implication being that all the time and energy wasted on eating could be spent on more worthwhile pursuits such as sewing or amateur dramatics.

Fortunately we lived in Africa where a cook came with the job but when independence was declared and we were obliged to return to the UK, having a mother who refused to cook could have become a liability. You might say it was a defining moment. In the event my father stepped into the breach; and I have cooked from the age of twelve.

All our African cooks relied on previous experience and an instinct for ingredients that allowed them to consistently produce excellent meals. I must have absorbed their intuitive, practical approach to cooking because it was our several African cooks who fuelled an early culinary curiosity in me.

In the absence of TV and other latter-day distractions I became a fixture in the kitchen, fascinated by the alchemy of food, the seemingly miraculous transformation of raw ingredients into a set piece, the limitless combinations of individual substances and colours translating into something inconceivable to the uninitiated. Ice-cream, curry or cake, were nothing less than miracles, and Mpishi was “god”. To this day I can remember his guiding hand directing my first attempt at cake-making. It was a two-coloured sponge and involved whisking egg whites – an opaque slop of substance whipped into a voluminous fluffy cloud. That was awesome and I was captivated.

I am aware that not everyone shares my passion for cooking. I doubt my mother's viewpoint is unique although, throughout the 1950s, most mothers would have expected to cook. For the modern woman / man technology offers tantalising alternatives to long hours spent in a kitchen. Most modern women expect to spend a good part of their lives outside the home. They have careers and the pre-packed meal and takeaway are a godsend. Our schools teach home-craft with a bias towards technology in place of old-fashioned domestic science.

This is not to criticise modern practice but to question whether the cost of liberation from the domestic sink has come at an extortionate price, depriving some individuals of an innately creative outlet. Not knowing where to start, lacking the confidence to try, or too stressed-out and exhausted through “real” work, it is hardly surprising cooking is frequently considered a chore rather than a pleasure. Paradoxically, cookery programmes are favourite TV viewing. So, instead of an engaging activity, cooking has been turned into the equivalent of a spectator sport. Besides, good restaurants abound and pubs serve food all day. Why compete in a world of experts?

In writing KITCHEN YOGA I am attempting to redress an imbalance rather than turn the clock back to some mythical “golden age”. It is intended for both those who love to cook and those who don’t but are willing to “give it a go”. Rather than chapters, I have divided the text into sections for easy reference, that allow for dipping in and out and negating a necessity to read the book from cover to cover.

Throughout the 13 years I taught wholefood cookery and nutrition on Tyneside and in Northumberland I encouraged students to trust their senses and experiment with ingredients, often without recourse to a recipe. The results were rewarding, sometimes amazing, and if nothing else made for self-confidence. In KITCHEN YOGA I have dispensed with calories; measurements are sometimes approximate because I tend to rely on instinct, common sense and above all a “feel” for the food I want to translate into a meal. Colour, shape, texture, combinations, location and production are as important for me as linear accuracy.

The philosophical or yoga aspect of the book is woven as a thread throughout the text and has less to do with exercises inviting the body to assume difficult (or well-nigh impossible) positions – although a few simple routines are offered in a dedicated section – than attitude, awareness and intention. The “yoga” is food for the mind, extending an invitation to be mindful, of our self, and of our relationship with others. Developing an awareness of an on-going relationship with food allows us to become more deeply committed to truly feeding and nourishing ourselves.

Yoga informs balance and dietary balance is as much a part of the practice as postures, movement or meditation. I have aimed for balance on several levels. Preparing the body for food is, I believe, as important as preparing food for the body. In compiling this book I have striven for common sense whilst borrowing from the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of minds more scholarly and enlightened than my own. I remain indebted to the many teachers whom I have never personally met, who have inspired me through their writings; and to those who have shared their practical experience, as well as their generosity of spirit, in demonstrating unflinching patience with a child who was forever asking “Why?”



## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

I have divided the book into sections for easy reference.

Menus are colour-coded:

- For vegetarian
- For vegan
- Where adaptation is possible
- Indicates fish or meat can be substituted for the vegetable option

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## SECTION ONE

### Seasonally balanced meals

This covers three-course meals inspired by a small group of yoga students and teachers who meet once a month to practice in an idyllic rural setting in North Northumberland.

The intention is to develop personal and communal growth with attention to our environment and the five physical senses. Weather permitting, we spend time walking meditatively experiencing the sense of touch, sight, hearing and smell. Taste is reflected in lunch, which comprises organic produce wherever possible. Fresh ingredients are prepared and cooked from scratch. The meals are cooked by gas but can as easily be cooked by electricity. Microwaves are excluded. The menus are for eight but are easily adaptable for fewer servings.



**AUTUMN**  
September – November

INTRODUCTION

September reflects Keats' "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness", shortening days, luminous milky moons, and the rituals of harvest suppers. The latter demonstrate not only gratitude for Nature's bounty but a keen appreciation of our connections with something bigger than our Self.



The season begins with fruition: the manifestation of Nature's summery labours, which we harvest, store and consume through the long lean months of winter. Or at least we used to prior to the wonders of modern technology that have dispensed with the uncertainties of an irregular food supply. Nowadays we reap the advantages of a world shrink-wrapped to the size of a global village: not only can we eat what we like, when we like and as often as we like, the very idea of the food supply being limited seems preposterous. And that is not to be decried, although it may be worth remembering only a generation or two ago availability was reduced to the home market, and some people

maintain that we were healthier as a result.

A full larder equates with comfort and security but if prolonged, will inevitably lead to loss of appetite as the pendulum swings towards its opposite polarity.

In the animal kingdom the keenness of hunger sharpens instinct for survival. For the most part we have tamed our physical environment, so the urgency of obtaining the next meal has been removed and our instincts have dulled into habit. This has enabled us to engage our mental faculties more fully. In

respect of our food the energy expended is mostly mental: deciding where and when to go to the supermarket, selecting from an almost unlimited range of produce and delivering it home brings dinner onto the table. The most physically demanding aspect of this process is probably unloading the shopping trolley into the car boot, taking it out again at the other end and distributing it around the kitchen shelves and refrigerator/freezer. Nothing comparable with actually digging the ground and tending the soil and its produce.

When the weekly supermarket trip becomes a repetitive chore we become bored. Our restless minds demand diversity and fascination with our mental capabilities has led us to manipulate foods to a degree that all too frequently renders them unrecognisable from their original basic state.

Somewhere along this road our minds have separated out from our bodies: the one wants excitement and titillation, the other craves nourishment. These cravings result in over-consumption and under-nourishment which then lead to crash dieting, food fads, allergies and addictions not to mention the other forms of torture we mentally inflict upon the body in an attempt to silence its clamour. We will either indulge it or deny it. Anything but feed it!

To experience wholeness again, to heal, to allow mind and body to reintegrate, means eating wholesome foods rather than fragmented manipulated substances that masquerade as foods. Systemically we are not designed to absorb and metabolise a cocktail of chemicals; we are designed to interact with what the Earth yields up out of its own wisdom.

A system bigger than our own, of which we are a part, requires that we eat mostly what is available seasonally whilst paying attention to our own rhythms. We breathe: we exhale and we inhale and in between these two polarities there is a pause. We need to exercise this pause between meal times. We need to eat at regular intervals instead of grazing on the hoof like overfed wildebeest. Nor are we ruminants. Yet walk down any high street and mouths are to be observed in perpetual motion, if not processing food then masticating gum.

We experience neither emptiness, nor the satisfaction of fullness that accrues from total emptiness because we are forever topping up. We have no real appetite anymore. We settle for over-salted and over-sweetened concoctions and rarely experience the delight of sharp, sour or bitter tastes. Without astringency we become sluggish, not just physically but mentally as well. So much of what we ascribe to stress is mental lethargy rather than a natural tiredness derived from sustained physical activity. We can, however, reverse this trend if we choose.

Centrally heated homes and sedentary lifestyles mean we do not need to consume the quantities of food our grandparents needed for fuel and warmth.

Preparing food from scratch rather than putting a ready-meal in the microwave may be time-consuming but we might benefit from slowing down to some extent; and gadget wizardry allows kitchen chores to be performed within a fraction of the time required in Grandma's day.

Washing and chopping vegetables done with attention is meditation. Paying attention is the key to any successful outcome: we are naturally inventive so our creativity is developed and what may start out as a chore soon becomes a pleasure. Success breeds success.

The intrinsic of food preparation cannot be measured linearly but many ancient texts allude to the importance of placing our own energy into the food if our families are to be adequately nourished. "Never cook when in a bad mood because it will affect the outcome of the meal" is an adage I have followed ever since I gave my husband indigestion through baking bread when in a rush and a sour temper.

I have discovered real power exists in the kitchen. We influence our families' lives not only by what we provide but also by how we provide it. Sitting down and eating together (without the intrusion of the television), even for one daily meal, encourages healthy communication amongst families.

This is not a question of believing me but of trying it and finding out whether or not it is true for you. The word community is a derivative of communication after all.

With Nature as our foremost guide and all the benefits of technology at our disposal we can confidently experiment. Electricity may have artificially extended our day, yet we know there is a different feel to a spring day as opposed to a winter one.

Autumn is the beginning of a withdrawal, it is a time for introspection and contemplation; a mourning for the passing year, a concentration or gathering in of information; it is wisdom as opposed to learning.

I find I am less inclined to relish salads when there is a nip of frost in the air; I'd rather drink hot blackcurrant juice than chilled orange which is more expansive; I want thick soups rather than consommé which is too thin; and I relish root vegetables in preference to raw celery.

I want hearty roasts, baked potatoes and boiled vegetables in preference to steamed ones unless, in the case of celery, the vegetable is not robust enough to warrant boiling. This does not mean I do not eat raw foods during the colder seasons, just that I eat more cooked and concentrated foods at these times. My body appreciates the extra warmth to balance the rawness of the weather and retains its reserves of energy for warding off those seasonal cold and 'flu bugs.

So, let's relax and begin.....



**SEPTEMBER**  
Menu serves 8

Baked Avocados with Red Pepper Purée  
Green Salad of Lambs' Lettuce, Rocket and Watercress  
Homemade Malted Bread with organic butter/olive oil  
Leek Tarte  
Red Cabbage  
Apricot Fluff



Because I work outside home organising my time is essential. I start with the bread as the other components of the meal can be fitted around the risings. For this menu, however, both bread and sweet can be made the day before.

**MALTED BREAD (Section Six – Bread: Granary baps)**

**BAKED AVOCADOS**

- 4 large firm, ripe avocados
- 2 large red peppers roughly chopped
- 4 large unpeeled cloves garlic
- 1 medium-large onion
- 70 gm thinly sliced and chopped button mushrooms
- 2 tbs virgin olive oil / organic sunflower oil
- 1 tbs lemon juice
- Sea salt and pepper
- 1 tsp dried Italian herbs or equivalent or 1 tbs mixed chopped fresh herbs e.g. parsley, rosemary, basil, chervil, marjoram and thyme.
- 100 gm grated Gruyere cheese
- 8 florets of fresh parsley for garnish (leave some of the stalk intact because it is the properties in the stalk that assist the uptake of the valuable iron – and encourage your guests to eat the garnish rather than set it aside!)
- Sprinkling of dried chilli (optional)



Place the garlic and chopped peppers in a pan, cover with boiling water and simmer, covered, for approximately 10 minutes. Drain.

Peel the garlic and place this, the peppers and the lemon juice in a liquidiser and blend. Set aside.

Peel and finely chop the onion and, using a fry pan, soften in the oil, taking care not to brown.

Add the sliced, chopped mushrooms, the herbs and seasoning to taste and cook for a few minutes until the mushrooms are soft. Turn off the heat.

Then mix in the pepper and garlic puree, scraping out the blender with a spatula.

Halve and pit the avocados, and slice off a thin piece of the surface skin underneath so that the fruit will sit on a flat surface without rolling.

Fill with pepper and mushroom mixture, covering the surface as well as the hollow.

Sprinkle with the grated cheese and, optionally, the chilli.

Organise the fruits on an oiled baking tray and bake in the centre of the oven (Gas 5 / 190 C) for approximately 10–15 minutes.

To serve, arrange in a pre-heated oven-proof dish and top with the parsley. I like to use brown or orange earthenware flat dishes to balance the green avocado and red and green topping.

To complement the dish I serve up a large green salad of lambs' lettuce and mixed leaves of watercress and rocket in a large glass bowl so that the colour contrast is effective. A few minutes prior to dishing up I scatter the salad lightly with a little sea salt and drizzle with olive oil, stirring lightly with wooden salad servers.

And I cut the bread in chunks, unless serving it as bread rolls, and place these in a basket or wooden bowl, to complete the picture. Serve with a good quality creamy organic butter.

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## LEEK TARTE

Autumn leeks are deliciously succulent so I always use plenty whether as a main dish or a side vegetable.

A deep serving dish for 8 lined with a rich shortcrust pastry – 350 gm flour to 175 gm butter / shortening should suffice. I prefer SR (self-raising) to plain flour and I sift it twice into a large mixing bowl to ensure a good air supply. Lightly rub in the shortening with your fingertips until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. (I always use butter but lard is good too unless you are vegetarian). Then slowly add sufficient iced water to roughly mix the crumbs together with a spatula. Gather up the mixture with your fingertips and work into a soft pliable ball.

### For the filling

6–8 slender young leeks about 2.5 cm diameter and 20–25 cm length, thoroughly cleaned

A little ghee or olive oil in which to sweat the leeks

250 gm grated Gruyere cheese

200 ml organic crème fraîche

2 heaped tbs fresh chopped parsley

Sea salt and pepper and nutmeg to taste

**Note:** Nutmeg is toxic in large amounts. ¼ tsp is adequate for this dish.

**Handy Hint:** To chop parsley efficiently push it into a mug and scissor it. The task is completed in seconds.

Lemon juice added to the water tends to give the pastry a nice crisp texture. If you overdo the water just a little it is possible to salvage the disaster by quickly adding more flour and blending well.

Leave the pastry to rest for a few minutes. Then roll out on a floured surface to a size larger than the dish, trim the edges with a sharp knife leaving sufficient for shrinkage to take place. Chill in the fridge or leave in a cool place whilst preparing the filling.

Slice the leeks lengthways along the direction of growth and ensure you slice away from you so that your energy is directed into the food. Then finely chop and sweat them in a little ghee or olive oil for a few minutes just to take off the rawness but not so long that they become tender. Alternatively, if you are trying to reduce your fat intake, you can blanch them and then drain.

In a bowl mix the finely chopped leeks, parsley, seasoning and cheese with the crème fraîche. Pour into the pastry crust and bake in the centre of a hot oven (Gas 6 / 200 C) for 40 – 45 minutes. The leeks need to be thoroughly cooked but check that they are not browning after 30 mins; if necessary turn down the heat. Scatter some parsley sprigs over the top just prior to serving.

For a richer tart you can blend a raw egg into the mixture prior to cooking.

This will produce a firmer, set filling.

If you don't like crème fraîche use whipping cream.

In summer I serve this tarte warm with a large mixed salad. In the Autumn I find it marries well with red cabbage as an accompaniment and in winter I like to use mashed butternut squash sprinkled with roasted cashews.

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In a large fry pan (with lid) sweat the garlic and onion in the ghee/oil over a medium to low flame/heat. Remove the lid, add the cabbage and coat well with the melted ghee. Add the apple, stirring continuously. Season and sprinkle on the sugar and vinegar. Stir in the raisins and the cinnamon. Cover with a well fitting lid and turn the heat down to its lowest setting. Cook for 10–15 minutes. The cabbage needs to be tender but not collapsed. Check that the mixture does not dry out or it will burn. Add a little hot water from time to time if necessary, and check the flavour. If it is too sharp for your taste add a little more sugar, if too sweet add extra vinegar.

Turn out into a pre-heated serving dish and keep warm until required.

Sometimes I add a knob of butter just before serving – it gives a gloss.

This dish can be reheated but it will not taste quite the same as served up fresh from the pan.

### RED CABBAGE

1 whole small red cabbage or a section of a large one, sliced and shredded

1 large onion sliced and finely chopped

2–4 cloves garlic (optional), finely chopped

2 medium sweet red eating apples, peeled, cored and roughly quartered

1–2 tbs of cider or raspberry vinegar

1 scant handful raisins

1 – 2 dsp cinnamon

1 large tbs Demerara sugar

Salt and pepper to taste

1 generous tbs ghee or 2 tbs olive oil

A little water



## APRICOT FLUFF

250 gm dried apricots washed and soaked overnight  
450 gm live bio yoghurt  
3–4 tbs clear organic honey  
200 ml whipping cream lightly whipped to a firm but dropping consistency (optional)  
8 halved walnuts or blanched almonds/ cherries / angelica for decoration

Drain the apricots and retain the liquid.

Blend the apricots in a food blender and scoop the pulp into a mixing bowl. If there is difficulty in getting out all the fruit add a small amount of the retained liquid and whizz round in the blender, pour this onto the fruit and mix thoroughly with a spatula. Stir in the yoghurt carefully and mix well. Then add sufficient honey to sweeten according to your taste.

Divide into 8 glass dishes and decorate with the cream and choice of topping. The cream can be omitted. Angelica and cherries contrast fittingly with the apricot colour. And when I made this for my children I would sometimes sprinkle grated chocolate (sparingly!) over the top.

For a quick version substitute the dried apricots with 2 jars “Whole Earth” unsweetened apricot jam, dispense with the blending and simply soften using a wooden spoon before adding the rest of the ingredients. Check for sweetness; you may find you require less honey.

## OCTOBER Menu for 8

Avocado Hummus and fresh white Bread Rolls / Toast  
Mixed Bean Casserole and Creamed Spinach  
Apple and Orange Crumble with Crème Fraîche / Custard



Drain the chickpeas and bring to the boil in a pan of fresh water. Cover with a lid and simmer until soft. This takes about ½ hr – it often depends on how old the chickpeas are. Never cook legumes (peas and beans) with salt as it toughens them. Drain the chickpeas retaining the liquid.

Then place in a blender or food processor with the remaining ingredients and sufficient chickpea liquid required for the puree to become the consistency of creamy mashed potatoes. It needs to be soft and firm, not sloppy. Sometimes no extra liquid is required at all. Check the taste – you may want to sharpen the flavour with extra lemon juice or add a little more tahini if you really enjoy the taste of sesame. Scrape out into a deep bowl. I use a red bowl in the cooler months, a cobalt blue one in the summer. Place this in the centre of a tray scattered with salad leaves and serve with warm toast or fresh bread rolls. Dispense with butter – it is superfluous and will mask the flavour of the hummus.

These amounts make a generous quantity and any leftover can be frozen without impairment to the flavour. Overall, I am disinclined to freeze foods, preferring to eat them fresh, but sometimes it is useful to have something ready to hand for when unexpected visitors turn up, or you are busy and want an instant starter so that you can tend to a more intricate main course or dessert without becoming flustered.

Hummus is highly nutritious, rich in vitamins and minerals, unsaturated fats and provides a complete protein meal for vegans and vegetarians.

Chickpeas, also known as garbanzos, contain more vitamin C and double the amount of iron than most legumes and in North Africa dried chickpeas, are ground into flour to form the essential part of couscous.

### BREAD ROLLS (Section 6) AVOCADO HUMMUS

200 gm dried chickpeas soaked overnight  
4 cloves garlic crushed  
4 tbs fresh lemon juice  
200 ml light tahini  
1 tsp salt  
2–4 tbs olive oil  
Liquid from *cooked* chickpeas  
2 large avocados or 3 small ones pitted, peeled and roughly chopped



## MIXED VEGETABLE CASSEROLE

### For the casserole

500 gm cooked beans  
1–2 tbs ghee or olive oil (ghee imparts a richer flavour)  
2 tsp black onion seeds  
1 large onion chopped  
1–2 cloves garlic (optional)  
Piece of peeled finely chopped root ginger (about the size of the first thumb joint)  
1–2 medium-large carrots cut lengthways according to direction of growth and then sliced diagonally into small pieces  
½ medium-sized butternut squash peeled and cubed  
2 sweet potatoes peeled and cubed  
1 courgette roughly chopped  
1–2 leeks prepared like the carrots  
1 cooked organic sweet corn hulled  
1–2 red peppers de-seeded and chopped  
1 cupful frozen peas and / or broad beans  
1 small head blanched broccoli / cauliflower broken up into florets  
1 tin organic chopped tomatoes and half as much water  
Some small cooked potatoes (optional)

### Spices and Seasoning:

1 tsp lemon juice  
1 bay leaf  
Pinch mixed herbs  
1 tbs Demerara sugar  
1 tsp cinnamon  
Small cup fresh, chopped parsley for garnish  
Pinch cloves  
Sea salt and pepper



**Note:** Preparing beans can be time consuming so cooking large quantities at a time, using what you need and freezing the rest in meal size portions makes for efficiency. (250 gm mixed dried beans, will yield approximately 500 gm cooked beans).

Select a colourful blend: red kidney, butter beans, mung, flageolets pintos, blackeyed, soya. Buy organic where possible.

Soak these in a large bowl with a generous covering of cold water overnight. Drain, rinse and bring to the boil in a large pan of fresh water. Allow a brisk boil for at least 10 minutes.

Skim off the froth (scum), cover with the pan lid and simmer until soft. This can take from 30–40 minutes.

For the casserole I use a large heavy-based wok with a lid.

Heat ½ the ghee or oil and add the mustard seed. Cover with the pan lid to prevent them scattering all over the kitchen as they explode. Turn off the heat as soon as the seeds start spitting to ensure the fat does not burn. Wait until they quieten before turning the heat back on low. Add the rest of the ghee or oil, the garlic, ginger and onions. Stir well until the vegetables soften.

Gradually add (stirring to coat well with the fat) the carrots, squash, sweet potato, courgette, leeks, and peppers. Cover for a few minutes and turn down the heat to allow the vegetables to cook in their own moisture.

Then add the chopped tomatoes, sweet corn, beans, spices and seasonings. Stir well; adding sufficient water from the tomato can to ensure a good supply of liquid. Add more water if necessary.

Add the frozen vegetables, the broccoli or cauliflower, and the cooked potatoes (option). Bring back to the boil and check the flavour. If necessary adjust seasoning. Cover with the lid and turn the heat down to the lowest setting. Simmer for ½ hour for all the flavours to be absorbed.

Turn out into a deep pre-heated casserole bowl and sprinkle with chopped fresh parsley. I use an Alasdair Hardie stoneware bowl because I love his earth colours and the texture of the pot lends itself to the heartiness of the casserole: the container and the food balance each other. It reminds me of a saying attributed to the Zen tradition:



*Clay is shaped into a pot  
But it is the emptiness inside  
that holds whatever we want.*

This casserole can be served with chunks of bread or plain, boiled rice. It can also be curried using a small jar of curried paste in place of some of the spices.

For an even heartier meal you can add dumplings made with 250 gm SR flour and 125 gm butter/vegetarian suet together with ½ tsp salt rubbed to a consistency of fine breadcrumbs and mixed to a stiff dough with cold water. Divide into small balls and add to the casserole at the point where the last vegetables have been included and cook for 30 minutes.

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## CREAMED SPINACH

Thoroughly wash 1 kg spinach and steam for 10–15 minutes. Scoop out into a pre-warmed serving bowl; press out and strain any residue liquid, reserving this for stock. Then blend in 1 small carton crème fraîche or ½ small carton whipping cream. Grate a little nutmeg over the top prior to serving (optional).



## APPLE & ORANGE CRUMBLE

### For the crumble

250 gm organic white SR flour (use wholemeal for a fuller texture)

As an alternative you can substitute 50 gm flour with 2 tbs rolled oats

125 gm organic butter

2 tbs fine natural cane sugar

Using your fingertips rub in the butter with the flour until mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Then stir in the sugar.

Fill an oven-proof pie dish up to  $\frac{2}{3}$  with pre-cooked sweetened apple into which you have stirred 1 large tbs dark thick-cut marmalade.

Sprinkle on the topping to cover generously. Any left over can be frozen.

Bake in a hot oven (Gas 6 / 200 C) for approximately 30 minutes. Check after 20 minutes and if necessary turn down the heat to prevent browning. I like a pale vanilla coloured crumble but you may prefer a more golden version. Keep warm until required.

Make custard according to directions for **CUSTARD CREAM** (Section One –MARCH: Dessert)



This makes a fairly hearty meal. Unless your guests insist upon coffee, you might like to offer a fruit or green tea to finish off.

If you want to remain caffeine-free and also give your kidneys a tonic you could try Dandelion Coffee.

NOVEMBER  
Menu for 8

Spinach Soup  
Bulgur Wheat Pilaff  
Cream Baked Potatoes  
Crème Caramel or Bread and Butter Pudding



Prepare the vegetables. Sweat the onion, garlic, celery, carrot, leek, mushrooms and butternut in heated fat / oil in a large, heavy-based pan with a well-fitting lid.

Add the spinach and water. Bring to the boil and then turn down to simmer with the lid on until cooked (approximately 15–20 mins). Add the potatoes, milk (if using), bouillon powder and seasoning and simmer for a further 5 minutes. Check and increase the liquid with more water if necessary. Turn off the heat and allow to cool prior to blending in a liquidiser. Reheat adding half the cream. Pour into a warmed, large tureen and swirl the rest of the cream over the top prior to serving.

\*If using Soya milk add it at point of blending to prevent curdling.

I find the cream definitely enhances the flavour of this soup.

I used to make croutons to go with it rather than bread rolls. Since Phileas Fogg arrived on the scene I've used Mignons Morceaux instead.

### BULGUR WHEAT PILAFF

This is a highly versatile nutritious dish that can be adapted not only for meat eaters but seasonally. It is also quickly prepared and cooked within half an hour.

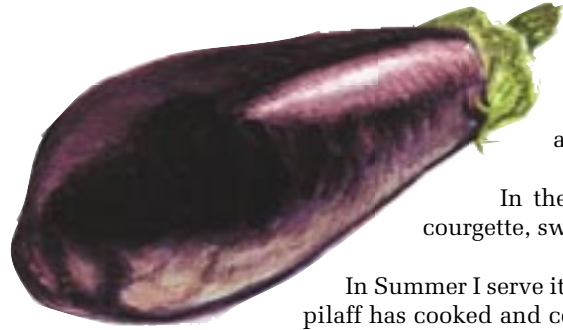
Sweat in a little olive oil or 1 good tbs ghee a variety of fresh seasonal vegetables. Add 200 gm bulghur wheat and 500 ml water together with 2 tsp vegetable bouillon powder. Stir well, bring to the boil, cover with a well fitting lid and simmer until the bulghur

### SPINACH SOUP

- 1 large onion finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic peeled and finely chopped
- 125 gm mushrooms wiped and finely sliced
- 1 stick celery finely chopped
- 1 large leek cut and sliced into small pieces.
- 500 gm spinach
- 1 large carrot thinly sliced or shredded
- 1 small butternut squash peeled, de-seeded and cubed
- 3–4 small cooked potatoes cubed
- 1 tbs ghee / 2 tbs olive oil
- 800 ml cold water / 400 ml each water and milk / Soya milk\*
- 2 heaped tsp vegetable bouillon powder (2 meat / chicken stock cubes for meat eaters)
- Sea salt and pepper
- Small carton of cream (optional)



wheat has absorbed the liquid – approximately 15 minutes. Check the seasoning and add some sea salt if required. If this is to be a non-vegetarian dish then add smoked fish or some cubed pieces of pre-cooked pork or chicken at the point where water is being added to the vegetables. For 8 people I would allow 500 gm meat or fish.



As I am serving this in November I use 1–2 cloves garlic, an onion, leeks, carrot, a piece of swede, parsnip, and butternut as a base. I also incorporate some cooked, de-husked organic sweet corn, a tin of organic chopped tomatoes, beetroot, broccoli and cauliflower. Vegetables I omit at all times are kale, sprouts and all varieties of cabbage because they impart too strong a flavour.

In the Spring I would omit the majority of roots in favour of celery, sweet peppers, courgette, sweet potato and aubergine.

In Summer I serve it cold or warm as a salad, using onions, garlic and celery as the base. Then, once the pilaff has cooked and cooled a little I go wild with chopped rocket, cooked peas and green beans, olives, red and yellow bell peppers, fresh, chopped tomato rather than tinned. I add some fresh lemon juice and a little olive oil to gloss it, and lots of ground black pepper. It makes plenty for 8 people and will save in the fridge for a couple of days.

For vegetarians I add cubes of feta cheese, and for non-vegetarians it takes well to fish or chicken. So if you have had roast chicken on Sunday you can use the cold left over chopped into small pieces.

#### **Sauce to accompany the hot vegan / vegetarian pilaff**

Fry in a little olive oil 1 crushed clove garlic and 1 finely chopped onion. Add 1½ cups tomato juice, ⅓ cup smooth or crunchy organic peanut butter (depending on whether you prefer a smooth or chewy consistency) diluted with a little warm water. Season with sea salt. Adjust the thickening adding a little more tomato juice or peanut butter as required.

Fresh tuna fish works well, particularly with olives and tomatoes for a Mediterranean flavour. I like to use smoked fish that has not been dyed; cod loin is delicious.

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#### **CREAM BAKED POTATOES**

Butter a pie or flan dish and ¾ fill with thinly sliced peeled potatoes that have been well rinsed in a colander and placed in a clean tea towel to absorb most of the water. Season with sea salt and pepper and dot each layer with butter.

I find Red Desiree potatoes particularly suitable for this dish because they are waxy in texture and in holding their own they balance the rich overtures of the cream, but really any variety (except for those that turn floury if boiled) will be fine.

Pour a carton of single or whipping cream over the potatoes: 200 ml for 4 people, 400 ml for 8. The cream needs to be almost level with the top layer of potato – if it isn't then top up with organic whole milk. If you like garlic crush one or two cloves into the cream before pouring.

Grate nutmeg sparingly over the top and cover the dish with a lid or foil. Bake for 1 ½–2 hours (Gas 3 / 170 C) or until the potatoes feel tender to the point of a knife.

Scatter sprigs of parsley over the top prior to serving. As an alternative garnish use shavings of fresh parmesan cheese

For 8 people I would allow at least 1.5 kg of peeled potatoes. Vegans can adapt this dish by layering the potatoes alternately with sliced onions and using stock or water in place of milk and cream.

If I am serving these potatoes with the pilaff I finish off the meal with something light like Crème Caramel. If I omit the potatoes in favour of a green salad then I offer a more substantial sweet such a Bread and Butter Pudding based on a version invented by Anton Mossiman.

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#### **CRÈME CARAMEL**

600 ml organic whole milk  
1½ tbs natural cane caster sugar  
2 organic eggs and 2 organic egg yolks  
2–3 drops pure vanilla essence  
125 gm unrefined natural cane sugar  
4 tbs water

Egg whites tend to curdle the mixture so it is important to use more yolks than whole eggs; for a richer custard simply add another yolk.

Add the 125 gm natural cane sugar to the water, bring to the boil and continue boiling until the liquid acquires a light brown colour. Remove from the heat. Add 1 tsp boiling water, stir and pour into a dry warmed soufflé dish. Then carefully turn the mould around until the base and sides are coated with the caramel. Set aside.

Scald the milk. Break the eggs into a bowl, add the extra yolks and beat well with a fork without allowing them to turn frothy. Add the caster sugar, vanilla and milk and stir until the sugar is dissolved.

Strain this mixture into the soufflé mould, cover with foil or a piece of buttered paper and place in the centre of a bain-marie (a roasting dish half-filled with hot water is fine). Bake for 40–50 minutes at (Gas 5 / 190 C). The bain-marie protects the custard from direct heat which can cause curdling. Remove from the heat when it is just set and leave until cooled before turning out.

## BREAD & BUTTER PUDDING

250 ml organic whole milk  
250 gm organic double cream  
2–3 drops pure vanilla essence  
Pinch salt  
3 large organic free-range eggs  
4 bread rolls  
40 gm softened organic butter  
Scant handful sultanas soaked in hot water  
1–2 tbs good quality apricot jam warmed to allow for easy spreading

During the colder months (November – March) I use a lot of cream-rich recipes, and butter too, because we need the extra warmth despite the fact that central heating is now commonplace. Our bodies, in harmony with Nature are in contractive phase and biologically they are still in tune with our early ancestors. It is a myth that a fat-rich diet makes us put on weight. It is sugar and refined carbohydrates such as white flours, biscuits and junk cereals that add on the pounds. Our bodies are designed to burn fat as fuel and are perfectly equipped to do so. We need approximately 25% of our diet to be fat, mostly unsaturated and from a variety of sources: nuts, oily fish, seeds and legumes which all contain ample quantities of nutritious healthy fat. Once I understood nutrition and gave up dieting in my twenties I have never needed to consciously attempt to lose weight, even after Christmas!



Bring the cream, milk, salt and vanilla slowly to the boil. Whisk the eggs and sugar and then add the hot liquid, whisking all the time. Pour into another basin through a sieve.

Grease a pie dish with buttered paper. Slice the bread rolls into threes crosswise and butter generously. Arrange them in the pie dish so that the top layer comes above the rim of the dish. Pour in the custard around the sides and leave to stand for an hour. Then cook in a bain-marie for approximately 40 minutes (Gas 3 / 160 C). Remove from the heat, scatter over the drained sultanas and smooth over with the heated jam. Keep heated until ready to serve, with double cream (optional).

If the company is mixed I tend to serve this with custard (made according to directions on the packet) rather than cream as I have yet to meet a man who does not like custard!

## WINTER

December – February

### INTRODUCTION

Well, winters may no longer guarantee to come in Dickensian-style but they are still cold enough: heavy rains, bitter frosts and occasional blasts of snow accompanied by freezing winds whipping across from either the Americas or Siberia. No matter what, we are exposed to the rawness of Life on

the outside. The days are short, often dark, and the nights long. Time to huddle, gift-wrapped, indoors, and for those of us still fortunate enough, in front of a live fire.



During this time of year I want porridge, a real fire-in-the-belly food if ever there was one. During that period of our history before England was united with Scotland, and skirmishes and forays were regular occurrences up North, the Scots would travel light, carrying a bag of oatmeal and a flat stone alongside their weaponry. They would turn the meal into bannocks by mixing it with water and then cook them on the heated stone. And this would sustain them without so much as a wince in the belly for up to 70 miles on horseback, after which, hopefully they

would round up some protein on the hoof to add a little variety to the diet. This was the forerunner of your American cowboy without the tinned beans.

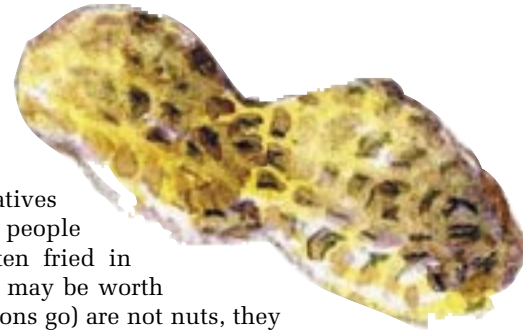
I want contractive foods, that is to say warming foods as opposed to expansive cooling ones because at this time of year our environment is in close-down and conserving energy to sustain itself during its resting phase. Biologically we also close down to some extent only we are probably not aware of this because we have become conditioned mentally to overriding our body signals. The days may be shorter but

electricity ensures a constant supply of artificial light and external heat so our lifestyles no longer allow for seasonal distinctions or adjustments.

Instinctively, at this time of year I yearn for plenty of root vegetables, potatoes, and legumes and the meat eaters in the family want roasts. They prefer red meat at this time of the year: sausages and casseroles, alongside the beef and Yorkshire puddings. And speaking of puddings, it is time for steamed sponges, custards, baked apples and dumplings. They want rich broth in preference to soups and consommés – lentils and split peas, barley and pumpkin. And to ensure plentiful supplies of vitamin C, dark green cabbage, broccoli and sprouts.

For vegetarians and vegans, chestnut and nut roasts are particularly sustaining. Nuts and beans are highly contractive (concentrated) foods, full of protein and rich in unsaturated oils; they also contain plenty of minerals such as calcium, magnesium and potassium as well as trace elements such as copper. Sunflower seeds possess zinc, manganese, copper, iron, phosphorus and potassium; and sesame seeds contain good amounts of lecithin, inositol and choline. Black walnuts are 28% protein as opposed to lean beef which is 22% but it is easy to get bogged down in statistics which, taken alone, tend to be useless information.

What we need to remember is that nuts and seeds are designed by Nature to be a highly sustainable winter food. Unshelled they are designed to store for very long periods. Try to obtain nuts from a reputable organic source and enjoy them. They will not make you fat if you eat them as a proportion of your meal rather than a snack!



Nowadays both shelled and unshelled nuts are treated with dyes, preservatives and growth inhibitors (which possibly accounts for the growing number of people demonstrating allergic responses to nuts). Packaged commercial nuts are often fried in saturated fats or hydrogenated oils, which reduce their nutritional value and it may be worth noting, peanuts / groundnuts (the main source of concern as far as allergic reactions go) are not nuts, they are legumes.

Peanut butter is a highly nutritious food. Unfortunately most commercial nut butters are hydrogenated to prevent them going rancid. Rancid fats are suspect because they release free radicals into the system, which can lead to illness. However, the additional hydrogen renders the essential fatty acids in the food nutritionally useless.

It is easy and quick to make your own peanut butter. Pour one cup of shelled nuts either raw or roasted into a grinder. Add one or two teaspoons of organic groundnut oil and a pinch of salt. Grind until smooth or crunchy according to taste.

Several of the recipes in this section contain my favourite nut dishes.

## DECEMBER

To sharpen an appetite on a cold day:

A Walking Meditation 6<sup>th</sup> December 2003 North Northumberland.

It is one of those diamond bright days, piercingly cold with an unyielding frost underfoot. Rather than face exposure on open hills, we drive down into one of the sheltered valleys smothered in a mixture of native trees and planted firs. A stream threads along the valley bottom and is incorporated into a landscaped setting with ponds surrounded by a gravelled path.

Several cars are parked in a semi-circle, their owners scattered into the hills, leaving us alone. We pause, momentarily absorbed by silence overlying the stillness of leafless trees and sombre pines.

To walk in meditation necessitates creating as little disturbance as possible. Simply retain the small individual within the greater whole without intrusion, without any imposition whatsoever. Just being and sensing. Just witnessing. Instead of looking and rearranging and improving, just see.

Upon this tiny fragment of our planet some human hand has fashioned out of the wilderness something accessible and beautiful and named it Wooler Common. Nature and human improvising, each in their own way. Nothing to add, nothing to subtract.

We walk with senses alert through every footfall and its contact with the ground. The foot is a great educator, each step individual, sometimes hesitating, at other times bold, acutely attentive to what is actually there. The feel for the ground comes through the back heel making the initial connection, and spreads upwards and outwards through the arch, across the ball of the foot and along the toes. Even the strongest shoes will not prevent the sensation coming through a foot that is paying attention. And the spring that comes through the back foot rises up, suffusing the whole body, right to the top of the head to bring clarity, to wake us up.

Then the sounds can come through, out of the Silence: the gurgling stream tumbling over the boulders, the chuckle of ducks hidden deep amongst the reeds, the brief chatter of small birds caught up in the shrubbery.





The crunch of the gravel underfoot is sharp, the whisper of sliding grass giving way under the ice, soft.

Against the bright sunlight, vision is sharpened to glimpse a chaffinch at a feeder hanging from a barren twig. A trio of ducks glides seamlessly across a glass pond, and the cold hand of winter rests its palm on the watcher's cheek. The steamy breath rises and falls, and continuing, matches the rhythm of the footfall. Inhalation through the right foot; exhalation through the left. A coming in; a going out. Moving along. In silent witness, feeling what is coming up from the ground; feeling the support; comprehending the strength; the power of gravity through the footfall and the exhalation, followed by the enormous surge of the up-thrust and a lengthening along the spine echoing the inhalation. Then we tune in, we harmonise with the basic rhythm of the planet – expansion, contraction, a coming in, a going out, and in between the pause, the rest, the Silence.

Coming back to the car park, to the point of origin, the circle is complete. Moving out from our still point, our centre, the attention is externalised and the general consensus is to return home. For lunch!

## DECEMBER Menu for 8



Sweet and Sour Nut-balls served with Avocado Salad and Leaves.  
Aduki Bean Cottage Pie  
Baked Pears in Cinnamon and Red Wine



Mix all the ingredients together in a mixing bowl. Shape into walnut sized balls and roll in extra wholewheat breadcrumbs.

Place on a greased baking sheet and bake (Gas 4 / 180 C) for approximately 20 minutes. Remove from the oven, place on a pre-heated plate and keep warm.

### For the sauce

Combine 1 tbs arrowroot with ½ a wineglass cider vinegar. Mix in 1 tsp tamari Soya sauce and 1½ tbs runny organic honey. Add 1 tsp vegetable bouillon powder and stir well.

Gently heat this mixture in a heavy-based saucepan, stirring all the time, and as it thickens pour on sufficient vegetable stock to obtain a thick but pourable sauce. Adjust the seasoning.

I serve this in a large orange-coloured gratin dish containing a mixture of green salad leaves, chopped spring onion and avocado sprinkled with lemon juice and salt.

Scoop the salad to the sides of the dish and place the heated nut-balls in the centre. Pour the sauce over the nut-balls and serve at once on pre-warmed side plates.

### SWEET & SOUR NUT-BALLS

250 gm mixed milled nuts (no peanuts)

250 gm wholewheat breadcrumbs

1 tbs fresh chopped parsley

½ tsp dried sage

Seasoning

1 free-range organic egg beaten

80 gm grated Gruyere cheese

1 clove garlic crushed

1 finely chopped onion sweated in 25 gm ghee  
or 1 tbs olive oil

**Aduki Beans** are native to Japan and are considered an important staple food. They have a sweet taste and are easily digestible. For centuries oriental herbalists and bare foot doctors have used these beans to help remedy kidney complaints. To make their prescription soak 2 tbs aduki beans overnight. Drain and rinse. Boil up in approximately 2 litres water until they are soft (about an hour) and at least half the liquid has evaporated. Add a small pinch of sea salt, strain and drink the liquid three times a day.

## ADUKI BEAN COTTAGE PIE

125 gm beans soaked overnight

1 clove garlic (optional)

1 onion finely chopped

1 large carrot shredded

1 tbs organic vegetable or tomato puree plus 1 tbs tamari Soya sauce

½ cup white long grain rice cooked in 300 ml salted water

A little oil or ghee to sweat the onion, garlic and carrot

Seasoning + a little grated fresh root ginger (optional)

Sufficient creamed mashed potato to cover a pie dish to a depth of 3 cm

Strain the soaked beans, rinse and place in a saucepan.

Add 600 ml cold water, bring to the boil, cover with a lid and simmer for between 45–60 minutes, adding more hot water as necessary.

Meanwhile soften the garlic, onion and carrot in the oil or ghee. Do not brown. Remove from heat.

Strain the cooked beans retaining the water for stock which can be added to soups, or drunk as a kidney tonic.

Place the beans, vegetables and cooked rice in a large mixing bowl and stir well. Add the soya-sauce, vegetable or tomato puree and mix well. Add sea salt to taste.

Grease a deep pie dish and add the bean mixture, spreading evenly with the back of a spoon or a palette knife.

Mash and cream the potatoes with butter, milk or cream (or a combination) and cover the bean mixture whilst still warm, for ease of spreading. Sometimes I blend into the potato a good tablespoon of creamed horseradish.

Bake the pie in a medium-to-hot oven until the potato is browning on the top. About half an hour (Gas 5–6 / 190–200C)

Serve with Brussels sprouts or dark green cabbage. If using sprouts I allow 5 per person and steam for 10 minutes in a vegetable steamer. Personally I think dark green cabbage tastes better for being boiled for about 20 minutes. I retain the liquid for stock, or to drink with a little tamari added. And just prior to serving I add a knob of butter to either vegetable simply to enrich its flavour.

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## PEARS IN RED WINE

Allow 1 ripe pear per person. (Ensure the fruit is firm, not soft)

4 tbs natural granulated cane sugar

150 ml water

150 ml red wine

¼ cinnamon stick plus 2 tsp cinnamon

Handful raisins (lexias are particularly good)

A little shredded crystallised citron or orange peel  
or 1 tsp good quality marmalade

Pinch dried clove or 6 whole cloves

Peel and cut the pears in half, downwards from the stalk, and carefully remove the core. Retain the fruit in a bowl of very lightly salted cold water.

In a large shallow fry pan dissolve the sugar in the wine and water and add the cinnamon stick.

Place the pears in the hot liquid, cored side down and ensure there is sufficient liquid to cover them. If not, I tend to add more wine rather than water, but water is fine. Add the raisins, crystallised fruit or marmalade; sprinkle with powdered cinnamon and poach for about 20 mins until the

pears are cooked through but not collapsed! The cinnamon will thicken the sauce; if the liquid has reduced too much add a little hot water at this stage.

Turn off the heat and remove pears with a slotted spoon. Arrange in a warmed shallow serving dish. I use white or blue porcelain to complement the burgundy-coloured sweet. Strain the sauce over the top and keep warm.

Serve with crème fraîche, whipped cream, or yoghurt. Yoghurt is a good counterbalance to the sweetness of the syrup.

If serving this sweet in the summer I omit the citron / orange and the cloves, and reduce the amount of cinnamon by ¼.

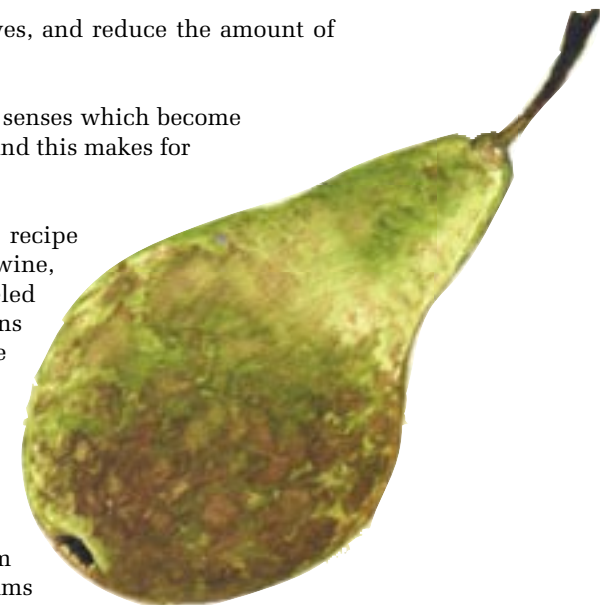
In winter the strong pungency of orange and aromatic spices wakens up the senses which become sleepy during the colder months. The pungency sharpens us, keeps us alert and this makes for lively company.

During the summer or early autumn I serve this sweet cold and vary the recipe slightly: I make the syrup in a large saucepan using 200 ml water and 200 ml wine, 6 tbs sugar and a cinnamon stick and boil for one minute. I use whole peeled pears; leave the stalk intact and remove the “eye” at the base. Place the raisins and pears in the syrup, stalk uppermost to prevent discolouration around the cores and poach for 15–20 minutes. Remove the pears and raisins with a slotted spoon and place in a serving dish.

There should be 300 ml liquid. Slake 1 tsp arrowroot with a little cold blackcurrant juice. Add this to the syrup and stir until boiling, reduce the heat and cook until the liquid has cleared. Spoon this thickened syrup over the pears ensuring each pear is well coated. Serve cold with whipped cream or a good vanilla ice cream. There are lots of delicious farm-made ice creams available these days, made without chemicals, or you can make your own.

**Note:** Cinnamon is good for colds, sore throats and is a natural breath sweetener. It serves as a tonic for the entire digestive system. It can be used as a sedative for mothers during childbirth. It stimulates the glandular system, acts as an antacid, which is useful for stomach upsets.

**Note** about sugar: (Section Seven)



## JANUARY

### Menu for 8

Spicy Lentil Soup  
Brazil nut Bake  
Hot Beets and Puréed Roots  
Dark Green Cabbage  
Tapioca Pudding  
Mulled wine



#### SPICY LENTIL SOUP

2 tbs olive oil or 1 large tbs ghee  
2 large onions and 2 fat cloves garlic finely chopped  
250 gm split red lentils  
600–800 ml cold water  
1 bay leaf  
½ tsp turmeric  
1 tsp finely chopped root ginger  
2 tsp curry powder / paste  
Sea salt and pepper  
Juice of half a large lemon (ensure it is thin-skinned and juicy)  
Freshly-chopped parsley and thick cream to garnish

down the heat, cover and simmer for approximately 30 minutes. Check the consistency: if it is too thick add more water. Season with salt and pepper and then add the lemon juice. At this point you can serve up immediately or, for a smoother consistency, pass through a blender and re-heat. Swirl cream on top and sprinkle with fresh parsley and eat with fresh, organic, wholemeal bread buns.

I have a lovely brown stoneware jug made by Alasdair Hardie, which makes an ideal serving vessel for this soup.

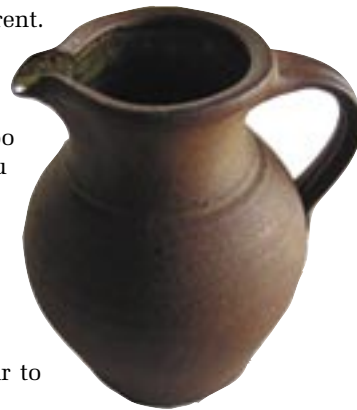
One of my grandmothers had a collection of chocolate brown glazed jugs and something similar to these is still probably available from china outlets.

This takes approximately 45 minutes preparation and cooking.

It is a hearty sustaining meal for one of the coldest months of the year. It adorns the table in a riot of colour defiant of frosts, ice, snow-banked gardens and early snowdrops. You come to the table and metaphorically warm your hands at it as you might once have thawed them before a blazing log fire.

I like to serve food in stoneware or earthenware much of the time so my preference is for white table linen as background, and there are so many pretty paper table napkins available to add colour and brightness.

Heat the oil / ghee in a heavy-based pan, add the onion and garlic and cook until transparent. Add the lentils, bay leaf and spices, stirring to incorporate the onions. Add 600 ml water and bring to the boil; turn



#### BRAZIL NUT BAKE

250 gm Brazil nuts chopped small (but NOT emulsified) in a food processor  
1 medium sized onion peeled and finely chopped  
1 medium organic green pepper de-seeded and finely chopped  
1 clove garlic crushed  
2 tbs olive oil  
250 gm organic chopped tomatoes (1 tin will suffice)  
2 tsp mixed herbs (ensure basil and thyme are included)  
1 good tsp curry paste  
150 gm wholemeal breadcrumbs  
1 organic free-range egg beaten (optional)  
Sea salt and pepper  
A few sprigs of parsley to garnish

The Brazil nut grows on a tree that can ascend to a height of 45m. The nut is reminiscent of a large coconut shell weighing up to 1.8kg and the seeds (what we call nuts) are neatly wedged together. These are a very rich source of protein, fibre, B complex vitamins and minerals: in particular phosphorus, potassium, calcium and iron.

70 gm are estimated to contain 914 calories so, for the calorie conscious, they are better consumed as a main meal than as a snack!

In a heavy-based fry pan soften the garlic, onion and green pepper in the oil. Combine the dry ingredients in a bowl. Add the onion mixture and the tomatoes. Season and mix well. If using an egg, add it at this stage. An egg will bind the mixture, rendering it suitable for slicing when cold, which is how I serve it in summer. It will also enrich it but for egg-sensitive people it is not essential. Spoon the mixture into a greased 500 gm loaf tin, or fluted ovenware flan dish. Bake for 40–45 minutes (Gas 5 / 190 C). If using a loaf tin, invert onto a warmed coloured plate (orange or red will complement it). Decorate with a sprig or two of fresh parsley.



## HOT BEETS

Allow one medium or two baby beets per person. Many supermarkets now sell good quality, pre-cooked, organic beets, though I still prefer to cook my own whenever possible. Peeling cooked beets is sensual: under guidance of deft fingertips the dull, leathery skin simply slides off to expose a dark red velvet body.

### For the sauce

50 gm butter

1 heaped tbs cornflour

1 heaped tsp mustard powder

600 ml milk approximately

Sea salt and pepper

If using fresh beets, cook in a large pan of unsalted water until the vegetable yields to the point of a very sharp knife. Drain and rinse in plenty of cold water. Peel whilst still warm and arrange in an oven-proof dish. Pre-cooked beets can simply be taken out of their packet and arranged accordingly. Keep warm.

Combine the mustard powder with the cornflour.

Place all the ingredients in a heavy-based pan. Turn on the heat to medium and whisk the mixture continuously with a balloon whisk until it thickens. The texture should be velvety. Pour over the warmed beets and serve immediately or cover with foil and keep warm until required.

If you like a stronger flavour, increase the amount of mustard powder.

## PURÉED ROOTS

Use a combination of favourite root vegetables.

For 8 people I would use:

1 medium sized butternut, peeled and de-seeded

2 large carrots scrubbed or peeled

1 large sweet potato peeled

1 large parsnip peeled



Chop the vegetables and steam in a vegetable steamer for 20 minutes or until softened. Turn out into a warmed bowl and mash thoroughly with 10–20 gm butter, salt to taste and a generous measure of freshly ground black pepper.

This is a satisfyingly sweet vegetable combination that harmonises with the hot beets but for those who prefer a sharper contrast try adding a little freshly squeezed lemon juice.

I do not use swede or turnip because I find their individual strong flavour tends to overpower the subtler sweetness of the other vegetables.

## DARK GREEN CABBAGE

1 head Savoy cabbage or 1 kg spring greens

Wash thoroughly in plenty of cold water and roughly chop, first removing the centre core, or in the case of Spring greens, the thick portion of the main leaf vein.

In a pan with a well-fitting lid, boil the cabbage briskly in plenty of salted water for 10–15 minutes. Drain, retaining the water for stock, or add a little Vecon and drink. Cabbage water contains masses of minerals and vitamins too precious to give to the waste disposal unit. Place the cabbage in a warmed tureen. Dot generously with butter.

## TAPIOCA PUDDING

50 gm tapioca

2 tbs sugar

2 breakfast cups milk

Walnut sized knob butter

A little grated nutmeg (optional)

Tapioca is a bead-like starch obtained from cassava root, one of the staple foods in Africa. It is widely used as a thickening agent, particularly in puddings.

Milk puddings have largely gone out of fashion now but brought to the table occasionally can elicit delighted surprise and exclamations of “Oh, I haven’t had that since I was a child!”

Supermarkets no longer seem to offer tapioca, or sago which can be made in exactly the same way. I obtain my supplies from wholefood shops.

Wash the tapioca and place in a buttered pudding dish. Sprinkle over the sugar. Pour on the milk and add the knob of butter. Sprinkle lightly with grated nutmeg and bake in a slow oven (Gas 3 / 170 C) until the pudding is set and browned on top, approximately 1 hour.

## MULLED WINE

1litre, or more, depending on quantity required, full-bodied red wine

½ cup brandy

Juice of 1–2 oranges + 1 or 2 oranges washed and sliced

1 lemon sliced

2 red apples cored and thickly sliced

3–4 tbs organic runny honey

2–3 cinnamon sticks, a small handful of cloves (about 20),

½ tsp grated nutmeg

A dash of orange based liqueur (optional)

Put all the ingredients except the sliced oranges in a large saucepan or preserving pan and heat gently without boiling. Taste for sweetness – if it is too sweet add more orange juice, too sour increase the honey. Strain, pour back into the pan, add the sliced oranges and keep hot until required. Pour into jugs and serve hot.