

APPLE PORRIDGE SLICE

Base

6–8 *Granny Smith* apples
2 cups of rolled oats
2 1/2 cups hot water
1 cup softened butter
2 cups firmly packed brown sugar
4 eggs
3 cups SR flour
2 tsp ground cinnamon
2 tsp ground nutmeg
250 grams sultanas
200 grams walnut kernels, roughly chopped

Topping

1 cup butter
1 cup cream
1 cup yogurt
2 cups rolled oats
4 cups walnut kernels, roughly chopped
4 cups shredded coconut

Note: If you're cooking walnuts, it's imperative that they are the lovely, plump, lightly golden ones, not the over-roasted, shrivelled up, old, dark brown ones. If you can't find any, use pecans instead.

Method

Peel and roughly dice the apples, then sprinkle them with lemon juice to stop them going brown.

Pour the boiling water on the oats and leave them to soak.

Cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy.

Add the eggs one at a time, beating well between each egg.

If using a mix master, at this stage you probably need to transfer up to a bigger bowl, so you can stir through all the remaining ingredients.

Check the oats. If they are too stodgy, add a little more water, just enough to loosen them up. Add the oats to the mixture and then sift in the flour, cinnamon and nutmeg and stir until all the ingredients are combined.

Add the walnuts, sultanas and apple and fold through.

Your oven needs to be around 180–190°C. We usually do a long, soaking fire-prep, get up to pizza heat and then go back down a bit (maybe stopping for pizza and bread on the way!). When the oven is bathed in a lovely warm afterglow, and the fire has died right down to softly pulsing coals, push the coals out to the edges of the oven and check the floor temperature by scattering some flour on and watching it toast. If it instantly incinerates, have at least another glass of wine and then try again...

This slice is fantastic for a wood-fired oven because it's so dense and moist. It is a bit of work though, so to be extra sure it doesn't burn on the bottom, I use an old patisserie trick and double-up on the containers.

So, spoon your batter out into your baking paper-lined pan and spread it right to the edges. Slide your second tray (if you've got one) underneath, put the mix in the oven and close the door.

The base needs to cook for around 30 minutes. I check it every 10 minutes and adjust its position in the oven accordingly. After about 20 minutes, if everything is looking good, I go make the topping.

Put the butter, the cream and the yoghurt in a saucepan and bring them to the boil. Add the sugar and cook, stirring, for a couple of minutes until it's all combined. Mix through the oats, walnuts and coconut and take the topping out to the oven. When your slice is lightly browned and feels firm-ish in the middle (just set enough to hold the topping is ideal), gently distribute the warm topping over the base.

Return the slice to the oven and cook for another 10 minutes or until the topping is firm and a rich, golden brown. Sometimes, we light another log from the coals and lightly 'grill' the topping near the flames to get a really crunchy, caramelised top.

Let the slice cool completely in the pan and then move to the fridge. The slice will keep for well over a week and will just get better each day as the oats absorb the flavour of the apple and the aroma of the spices.