

— THE —
DOMESTIC GODDESS
WANNABE

Bakes



SINGAPORE'S TWO-TIME
BEST COOKING BLOG WINNER

*Diana
Gale*

MIXING
ASIAN
FLAVOURS
WITH SIMPLE
RECIPES FOR
SCRUMPTIOUS
RESULTS

A round, scalloped-edged pie crust is centered on a light-colored wooden surface. The crust is filled with a pale, creamy filling. A wooden rolling pin is visible in the bottom left corner, partially overlapping the crust. The background is a light-colored wooden surface with some flour scattered around the crust.

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EPIGRAM BOOKS
SINGAPORE · LONDON

*For my mum, without whom
I would never have started baking*

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Contents

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<i>Introduction</i>	7
<i>Cook's Notes</i>	10
<i>Breakfast Bakes</i>	15
<i>Mid-Afternoon Treats</i>	51
<i>Teatime Savouries</i>	87
<i>Children's Parties</i>	115
<i>Celebration Cakes</i>	153
<i>Index</i>	190
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	192



Introduction

It all began with a recipe for butter cake and an exploding mixer. I was ten years old when my mum encouraged me to try following a recipe for the first time. And at the sight of my first butter cake – somewhat sunken and burnt – I was immediately obsessed with making it better. I whipped up that same recipe over and over again like a child possessed, until even the mixer got fed up of it and exploded. That’s the moment my mum realised my new infatuation and, after we’d wiped away all the splatters of cake batter from the kitchen walls, she went out and bought me a brand new shiny stand mixer. Thankfully, I’m much more in tune with my cooking utensils these days.

Baking has always been about sharing for me – I love to bake for other people. That fabulous feeling you get when you hear ‘Mmmmm’ as someone enjoys their first mouthful of something you’ve made, or when my kids announce I’ve made ‘the best cake in the world!’ – it’s simply unbeatable. And I’ve always been keen to share recipes, too – it’s only in sharing it that a recipe can survive. So it seemed a natural step for me when a friend suggested I start a cooking blog. And thus, The Domestic Goddess Wannabe blog was born and I’ve never looked back. Developing new recipes and sharing them on the blog over the last six years has increased my passion for baking more than ever.

I had to think long and hard about what I should include in my first book. I knew I wanted to cover most mealtimes, so you have options for Breakfast Bakes and Teatime Savouries, as well as some Mid-Afternoon Treats in between. I love Asian flavours, so I’ve included lots of recipes infused with Asian ingredients, like my Gula Melaka Coconut Buns, Kaya and Cream Éclairs, Cheesy Bak Kwa Twists and Delicate Bandung Chiffon Cake. I’ve also listened to the things you’ve asked for on my blog and in my cooking classes. I’ve tried to keep most of the recipes short, fuss-free, and using as few utensils

as possible (especially in Teatime Savouries, when the last thing you want to be doing is washing up loads of pans). I've used easily available ingredients and every recipe has been religiously tested, and tested again to ensure they're fail-safe and fun to make.

My two children, Aden and Jadelyn, love anything with cheese in, so you can thank them for the Cheesy Garlic Bread Roulades and the Easy Ham and Cheese Pinwheels. And my husband, Max, is the chocolate fiend in the family – I can always trust him to polish off most of the Chocolate Bourbon Cake when I bake one. I'm often asked by frazzled parents for tips on children's party food, so I've devoted an entire chapter to children's parties that offers quick, crowd-pleasing bites that allow you to enjoy the party whilst the oven does all the work. My Sticky Teriyaki Meatballs and Gooey Marshmallow Brownies are always the first to disappear from the table. There's also an entire chapter of Celebration Cakes, for bakes with a wow factor, like my Funfetti Birthday Cake and Almond and Elderflower Cake. And of course, I couldn't write my first recipe book – after all these years since my first ever bake – without including my much improved Pandan Coconut Butter Cake.

I'm sure it's as true for you as it is for me that there are just not enough minutes in a day. My full-time teaching job, cooking blog, and the two ever-hungry boys and girl at home keep me running around all day, every day. So for me, the title 'domestic goddess' these days applies to anyone who manages to find the time to have control over what they're eating and feeding others and, most importantly, enjoys cooking it – on top of doing whatever else it is that keeps them busy 24/7! So I hope that you will enjoy the recipes in this book as much as I do and I wish you many happy hours of baking!

Diana x



Cook's notes

You will notice a few terms, as well as particular techniques and ingredients, crop up now and again throughout my recipes. Here they are explained in full:

Windowpane stage

When you've kneaded your bread dough long enough to develop the right amount of gluten in it, which gives your dough the strength and structure it needs to hold essential air bubbles and rise, you will have reached 'windowpane stage'. If you use a dough which hasn't been sufficiently kneaded, the gluten in it will not be able to contain the air bubbles, resulting in a very dense loaf of bread. To test this, tear off a small piece of the dough, hold it in both hands with your thumbs and forefingers, and then stretch it out so it becomes translucent (like a window). If you're able to stretch it out without the dough tearing, it's reached windowpane stage. If the dough breaks before you've stretched it out into a window, you need to knead it for another couple of minutes before testing it again. If you're using a mixer, it will take around 15 minutes to knead your dough; if you're kneading by hand it will take around 45 minutes to an hour.

Proving

Proving refers to the final rise that raw bread dough undergoes before it is baked. I like to prove bread dough in an oven set very low at 35°C/95°F because it speeds up the process. However, if your oven doesn't have this low setting, you can either heat your oven to 50°C for 1 minute, then turn it off before placing your dough in to prove, or alternatively, you can place a damp cloth over the bowl with your dough in and just put the bowl in a warm and dry

place for the dough to prove. To check if the dough has proven enough, use your finger to make a small dent in the dough near the side of the pan. If the dent does not spring back, the bread is ready to be baked.

Tapping the cake tin

This is a technique I use particularly in my chiffon cake recipes to prevent large air pockets in the cake sponge. Lift the cake tin into the air about 10cm (4in) away from your kitchen counter, then drop it back down onto the worktop. Do this three times and it should help remove any large air bubbles from the cake batter. Alternatively, you can run a skewer around the batter to remove the air bubbles.

Fluting

Fluting is a way of decorating the edge of your pie crust with a wavy crimp pattern before it is baked. To do this, once you've lined your pastry into the pie dish, go around the rim tucking the dough under itself to tidy the edge. Then, using the thumb of one hand placed on the inside edge of the pastry, gently press the pastry edge out, whilst at the same time, using the thumb and forefinger of your other hand, positioned either side of your inner thumb, press inwards from the outside edge of the pastry to create a crimped effect. Continue this fluting all the way around the crust of the pastry to make a crimp pattern.

Perfect piping

A lot of my recipes call for a luscious frosting to decorate – and nothing beats the professional look of buttercream that has been swirled on with a piping bag. Here are a few tips on how to be the perfect piper.

First things first, if you're using a new piping bag you'll need to snip off the tip and drop the piping nozzle into place inside the bag. Be sure that you don't snip away too much of the bag so that the nozzle slips all the way through.

Second, fill the bag by holding it in the middle and opening up the upper half around your hand so you have lots of room to spoon the buttercream right into the bottom of the bag. Never over-fill a piping bag – just fill it to about half the way up so you have plenty of room to twist the top to seal (you can always top up with more buttercream later).

Hold the top end of the piping bag with your writing hand, and use your other hand to help guide the tip, at a 90-degree angle to the cake. Lastly, slowly squeeze the bag with your writing hand with a consistent pressure, and pipe out the frosting steadily and slowly. Practice makes piping perfect!

Chilling the mixing bowl and whisk

I'll often ask you to chill your empty mixing bowl, as well as your whisk in the freezer for 10–15 minutes before whipping up a cream. Cream whips a lot better when it is cold, so if you're using a chilled mixing bowl and whisk, it helps you to maintain the cooler temperature of the cream so it stays light and fluffy on your bakes for longer.

Dry-wet-dry method

When I make a cake, I like to alternate adding the wet and dry ingredients into the creamed butter and sugar batter – beginning and ending with the dry ingredients. Adding the liquid all at once could saturate the batter and cause it to separate (resembling scrambled egg); adding all the dry ingredients at once will make the batter too dry and could lead to over mixing, creating a dense and heavy cake. By following the dry-wet-dry method, stirring after each addition, you'll produce a light and tender cake every time.

Cutting cake layers

A cake with many layers means a taller cake with lots of scrummy filling. If you have lots of cake tins to work with, you can bake each layer individually. However, most of us don't have the kitchen cupboard space, so slicing the cake horizontally to create layers is the way to go.

To create even layers, use a small pairing knife to score around the outside edge of the cake – halfway up if you're dividing into two, or a third and two-thirds of the way up if you're dividing into three. Don't cut too deeply as this is only serving as a marker. Then, use a serrated knife (bread knife) and cut through the cake following the indentation made with the pairing knife.

Alternatively, you can buy cake levellers at most baking shops, which are very easy to use. Just place one hand lightly on top of the cake to stop it moving and run the leveller through with the other hand. If you chill your cake in the fridge before slicing, the sponge will be much sturdier and easier to cut.



Water bath

Some ingredients, like chocolate, burn easily. To insulate these ingredients from direct heat, use a water bath. In a saucepan, bring a little water to a boil, then lower the heat so that the water is just simmering. Place a heatproof bowl over the pan, ensuring that the bottom of the bowl does not touch the water, and place the ingredient(s) in the bowl to melt or cook.

Similarly, some batters require moisture when baking in the oven to insulate them from direct heat, resulting in a moist and even bake. To prepare the water bath for the oven, place the cake tin with your batter into a deep roasting pan and pour boiling water into the pan until the water reaches about halfway up the outside of the cake tin. Then, bake as per the cooking instructions in the recipe.

Ribbon stage

To test if you have beaten enough air into your batter, and the ingredients are well combined – lift your whisk from the bowl into the air while it's coated with some of the batter. If the batter falls slowly back into the bowl in ribbons that hold their shape for a few minutes before merging back into the mixture – you've reached ribbon stage.

Ingredients

- **Eggs:** I always use large eggs – around 65g (2¼oz) with shells – in my recipes, unless otherwise stated.
- **Oil:** I use canned oil spray to coat baking pans, as this helps to ensure that I have a very thin layer of oil on the pan.
- **Butter:** I always use unsalted butter in my recipes as it means I can control the amount of salt going into the recipe.
- **Salt:** I use kosher salt as it is less salty, but you can use any good salt (like sea salt) in your recipes. I do not use common table salt because it is not only more salty, but also contains no flavour.
- **Flour:** I use top flour or plain flour when I bake cookies and tarts, and cake flour for cakes. These flours are of a better quality and result in bakes that are more tender. In the event that you cannot find cake flour, you can make your own. To make cake flour, add 25g (1oz) of cornstarch (cornflour) to 100g (3½oz) of plain flour.
- **Baking soda (bicarbonate of soda) and baking powder:** These are not the same, and cannot be used interchangeably. Baking soda is pure sodium bicarbonate. It reacts well when added to acidic ingredients (like yogurt and chocolate) to produce carbon dioxide, which helps your bakes to rise in the oven. Baking powder already

contains both the baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) and acidifying ingredient (cream of tartar), as well as a drying agent (like cornstarch), too. I use double-acting baking powder, which releases gas in two stages: some gas is released in the batter during mixing at room temperature, but the majority of the gas is released when the temperature of the batter increases in the oven.

- **Cream of tartar:** I always use cream of tartar when I whisk egg whites. Cream of tartar stabilises egg whites and this makes whisking them an easier process. You can substitute cream of tartar in any recipe with the same quantity of lemon juice or vinegar.
- **Milk:** I use full-cream (whole) milk for all my bakes. Full-cream milk contains fat, which translates into flavour.
- **Sugar:** You can adjust the amount of sugar in all my recipes. Bear in mind, though, that sugar retains moisture, so the more sugar you take out of the recipe, the drier your bakes will become. I think it is all about finding a good balance between sweetness and keeping your cakes moist, so experiment to find the balance that suits your taste buds.
- **Chocolate:** I believe in using good quality chocolate when I bake. Dark chocolate is bitter, so when you add chocolate to any recipe, you must also adjust the quantity of sugar.

My three golden rules

Rule #1

Get to know your oven. (I can sense my students' eyes rolling as I write this because they hear me say it so often!) It's so important that you know which part of the oven is suitable for different bakes and that your oven temperatures are accurate. Once you understand your oven, half the battle is won.

Rule #2

I always use greaseproof paper when lining my cake tins or baking trays or sheets, even when I am using a non-stick pan. This simply helps when I take the cake (or bakes) out of the pan, and it also saves time on the washing up.

Rule #3

Always read the entire recipe before you start and make sure that you have all the ingredients and equipment you need ready – there is nothing worse than having to run out to get an ingredient halfway through the baking process.



— CHAPTER ONE —

BREAKFAST BAKES

Apple Raisin Pull-Apart Bread

Oh, the satisfaction of pulling apart perfect portions of bread as you devour it piece by piece! For something that looks so pretty and impressive when baked – bursting with slices of juicy apple – it’s incredibly easy to make.

MAKES 1 LOAF

160ml (5½fl oz) milk
½ tsp yeast
40g (1½oz) beaten egg
265g (9¼oz) bread flour
15g (½oz) cake flour
25ml (1fl oz) maple syrup
½ tsp salt
25g (1oz) unsalted butter
3 small apples, peeled and finely diced
1 tsp lemon juice
100g (3½oz) brown sugar
2 tsp ground cinnamon
40g (1½oz) raisins

a 23 x 13cm (9 x 5in) loaf tin,
lightly greased

Put the milk, yeast, egg, bread flour, cake flour, maple syrup and ¼ teaspoon of the salt in a mixing bowl. Use the dough hook attachment of your stand mixer, or a fork if you’re mixing by hand, to knead until the ingredients come together to form a ball. Add the butter and continue kneading until the dough reaches windowpane stage (see page 10).

Place the dough in a lightly greased bowl. Spray the dough with a little water and cover it with a piece of damp cloth before placing in an oven set to 35°C/95°F. Let the dough rise to double its size.

Meanwhile, combine the apples, lemon juice, brown sugar, cinnamon and the remaining salt in a bowl and mix well so the lemon juice coats the apple and it doesn’t brown.

Punch down the dough to remove any bubbles and roll it into a rectangle measuring 30 x 20cm (12 x 8in). Spread the apple mixture and raisins evenly over the dough, making sure to cover it all. Cut the dough vertically into 6 long strips. Very carefully, stack three strips on top of each other, so you end up with 2 stacks of three layers each. Then cut each stack into 4 squares, so you end up with 8 stacks.

Arrange the stacks, cut sides up, tightly next to each other, in the loaf tin. Cover the tin with a piece of damp cloth before leaving the dough to prove (see page 10) in an oven set very low at 35°C/95°F, or in a warm and dry place, for 45 minutes. Preheat the oven to 170°C/325°F/Gas Mark 3.

Bake the bread for 45 minutes until golden on top and cooked through. If the bread starts to darken too quickly, place a piece of aluminium foil on top to avoid burning, and continue baking. Turn out onto a wire rack immediately and allow to cool.



Cheesy Bacon Buns

These soft and fluffy buns are a real breakfast delight and are great as an afternoon snack or alongside a meal, too. Whether I bake them morning, noon or night, they're never around for long in my household.

MAKES
12

For the starter dough

220g (7¾oz) white bread flour
130ml (4fl oz) cold milk
½ tsp instant yeast

For the bun dough

95g (3¼oz) white bread flour
50g (1¾oz) caster sugar
1 tsp salt
½ egg, beaten
1 tsp instant yeast
50g (1¾oz) butter,
at room temperature

To finish the buns

1 egg, beaten with 1½ tbsp milk
120g (4¼oz) bacon, diced
100g (3½oz) mozzarella cheese,
shredded

a large baking tray, lightly greased

Tip all the ingredients for the starter dough into the mixing bowl of a stand mixer with a paddle attachment or into a large bowl. Combine with the mixer or your hands until a ball of dough is formed. Wrap the dough securely with cling film and chill in the fridge for at least 12 hours before using.

To make the buns, roughly tear the starter dough into pieces. Add these and all the bun dough ingredients, except the butter, to a mixing bowl and combine. Knead for about 5 minutes with a bread hook – or 15 minutes by hand on a lightly-floured work surface – to form a smooth dough.

Add the butter and continue kneading for 15–20 minutes using the machine or 45–50 minutes by hand until the dough has reached windowpane stage (see page 10). Cover the mixing bowl with a piece of damp cloth and place it in an oven set very low at 35°C/95°F, or in a warm and dry place to prove (see page 10). Allow the dough to rise to double its original size. This should take about 1 hour.

Punch the dough to expel the excess air, then divide it into 12 portions. Shape each piece into a ball and arrange the buns on the prepared baking tray. Return the buns, uncovered, to the low oven or warm and dry place to prove for another 45 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 170°C/325°F/Gas Mark 3.

Brush the buns with the egg wash, sprinkle over the bacon and cheese, and bake in the preheated oven for 25 minutes. Once baked, remove the buns from the tray immediately and place them on a wire rack to cool.

DIANA'S TIP

These buns should be stored in an airtight container. To soften, simply pop them in the microwave and heat for 10 seconds.



Apple and Caramel Muffins

I can't resist the combination of soft and tangy apple with sweet and gooey caramel in these muffins. It's divine! I use Granny Smith apples for their beautiful sweet-tart flavour which is enhanced alongside the buttermilk and caramel.

MAKES
12

Step 1 – Dry ingredients

450g (1lb) plain flour
½ tsp salt
4 tsp baking powder
½ tsp baking soda (bicarbonate of soda)
150g (5½oz) brown sugar

Step 2 – Wet ingredients

150g (5½oz) unsalted butter, melted and cooled
2 eggs, plus 1 egg yolk
240ml (8fl oz) full-cream (whole) milk
240ml (8fl oz) buttermilk

Step 3 – Flavour adventure

180g (6¼oz) Granny Smith apples, grated
1 tsp vanilla extract

Step 4 – For a sticky caramel ending

100g (3½oz) caster sugar
45g (1½oz) unsalted butter
60ml (2fl oz) heavy (double) cream

a 12-hole muffin tray, greased or lined with paper cases

Make the muffins using all of the ingredients and following the Muffin Adventure Method on page 25.

To make the caramel, gently heat the sugar in a saucepan set over a low heat, stirring constantly. The sugar will turn lumpy and start to brown as it heats before melting. Keep stirring to remove any lumps, until all the sugar has melted and is a slightly darker shade of brown in colour.

Add the butter all at once. The mixture will sizzle and hiss as the water in the butter hits the hot sugar and evaporates. Continue stirring to prevent the butter from burning. Once all the butter has melted, slowly add the cream and stir to combine. Again, the mixture will sizzle and hiss, so be careful.

Allow the mixture to boil for a minute, then remove from the heat and cool completely before drizzling over the muffins.

DIANA'S TIP

Make a batch of caramel ahead and store in a jar in the refrigerator until needed – and try to resist the temptation to steal a spoonful in the meantime!



Korean Egg Muffins

These muffins are super fast to whip up in the morning for breakfast and devour straight from the oven while hot and the egg is still oozing. Switch up the toppings as much as you like – these are great for using up leftovers.

MAKES
12

4 rashers bacon, diced
a little oil, for frying
2 eggs
100g (3½oz) caster sugar
195g (6¾oz) top or plain flour
1½ tsp baking powder
½ tsp salt
240ml (8fl oz) unsalted butter,
melted and cooled
120ml (4fl oz) milk
12 small eggs
½ bunch coriander, chopped
salt and coarsely ground
black pepper

*two 6-hole jumbo muffin trays,
greased*

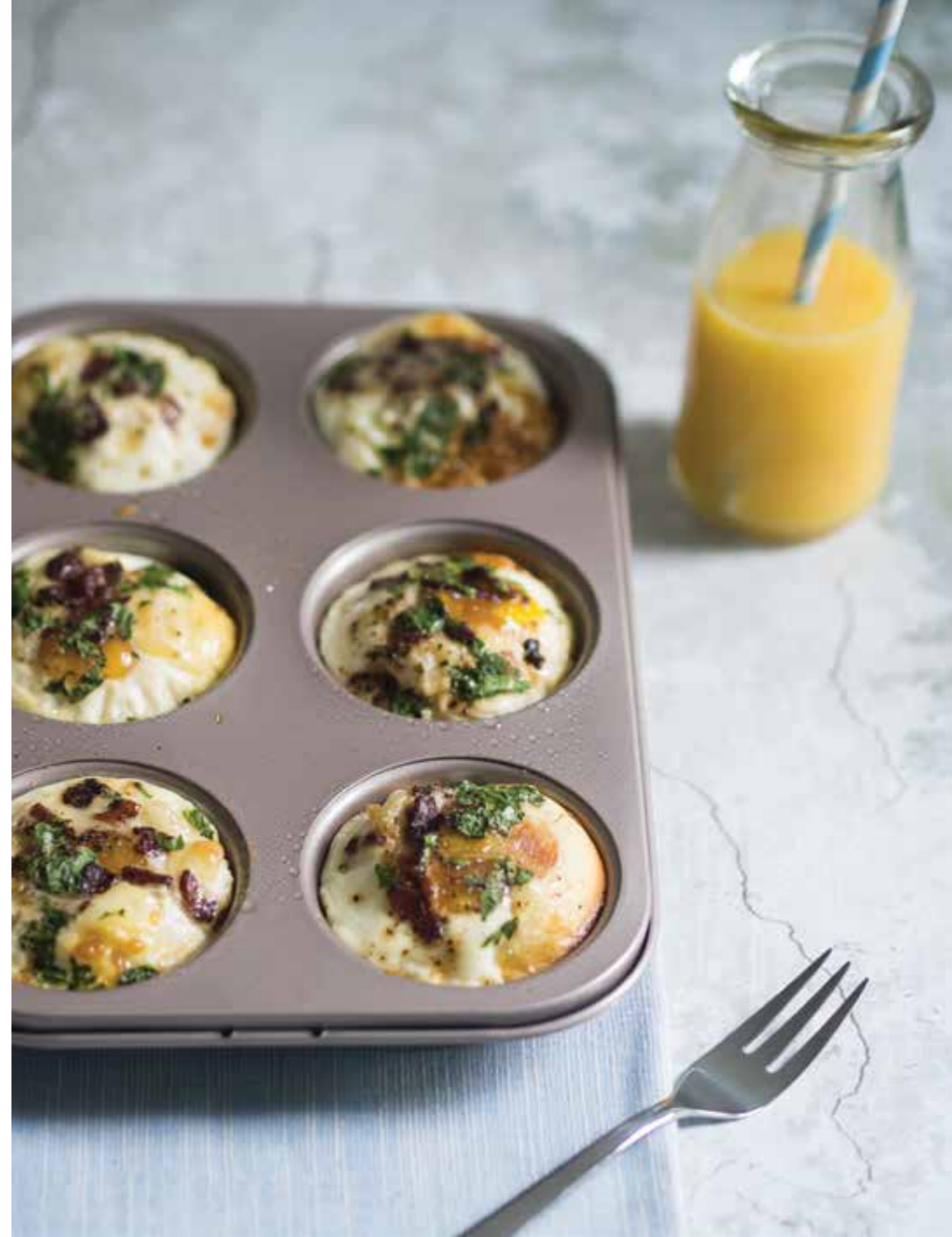
Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6.

Fry the bacon in a little oil until brown and crispy.
Set aside.

Beat the 2 eggs and sugar together in a large mixing bowl until the mixture turns pale in colour. Add the flour, baking powder, salt, butter and milk, and combine to a smooth consistency.

Spoon the batter evenly into the muffin trays so that each hole is about one-third full. Then crack a small egg over the batter in each of the muffin holes. Sprinkle over the crispy bacon and coriander and season well with salt and pepper.

Bake for 20 minutes until the eggs have set and the muffins are golden brown, and serve hot out of the oven.





— CHAPTER TWO —

MID-AFTERNOON TREATS



Double Chocolate Cookies

What's better than a chocolate cookie? A double chocolate cookie, of course! I use a little bit of coffee powder to really turn up the chocolate flavour, and then some chocolate chips for that something oozy when you bite into the crunchy cookie – perfect for when you need a chocolate fix!

MAKES
16

250g (9oz) unsalted butter,
at room temperature
80g (2¾oz) caster sugar
120g (4¼oz) brown sugar
2 eggs
300g (10½oz) plain or top flour
70g (2½oz) cocoa powder
1 tbsp instant coffee powder
(optional)
1 tsp baking soda (bicarbonate
of soda)
½ tsp salt
300g (10½oz) semi-sweet (dark)
chocolate chips

*a large baking tray, lightly
greased and lined*

Cream together the butter and sugars in a mixing bowl, until you have a pale and fluffy consistency. Add the eggs, one at a time, and beat until incorporated.

Sift the flour, cocoa, instant coffee powder, baking soda and salt into a large mixing bowl. Then gradually fold the dry ingredients into the batter in two stages, until almost combined. Lastly, fold in the chocolate chips. Chill the cookie dough in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours before using.

A little while before you plan to bake the cookies, preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.

Divide the cookie dough into 16 portions and roll into balls. Arrange them on the prepared baking tray, leaving some space between each for them to spread. You might need to bake them in two batches. Bake for about 15–20 minutes, or until the cookies are golden brown. Leave to cool on the tray for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.



Cheat's Egg Tarts

These eggy custard delights are my tasty, time-saver version of the traditional Chinese recipe. While I do not have much of a sweet tooth, I do love tarts. Since I prefer my egg tarts to be less sweet, I make my own. I use ready-made puff pastry, available in supermarkets to make the bases, which saves time and creates beautifully light and flaky tarts.

MAKES
12

100g (3½oz) caster sugar
3 sheets ready-rolled puff pastry,
thawed if frozen
3 eggs
200ml (7fl oz) milk
½ tsp vanilla extract
¼ tsp salt

*a 12cm (5in) round cookie cutter
ten 10cm (4in) tart shells (moulds)
a large baking tray*

Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6.

In a heavy-bottomed saucepan, heat the sugar and 120ml (4fl oz) water over a low heat, stirring until all the sugar has dissolved. Remove from the heat and leave to cool completely before using.

Cut the puff pastry into circles using the cookie cutter. Press the pastry discs gently into the tart shells, then place onto the baking tray.

In a separate bowl, beat the eggs, milk, vanilla extract and salt with a whisk until well combined. Add the sugar syrup and mix well.

Pass the egg mixture through a sieve twice to remove any lumps, then pour carefully into the tart shells. Bake in the preheated oven for 25–30 minutes, or until the custard has set. Transfer to a wire rack to cool before serving.



Gula Melaka Coconut Buns

The distinct deep caramel aroma of gula Melaka never fails to put me in a happy mood. And infused with the vanilla-like, floral notes of the pandan leaves, and the sweet and nutty grated coconut, it's a match made in heaven. I enjoy mine as a mid-morning treat, along with a piping hot cup of kopi-O.

MAKES
12

180g (6½oz) gula Melaka, chopped
6 pandan leaves, knotted
150g (5½oz) grated fresh coconut
300g (10½oz) bread flour
20g (¾oz) rice flour
½ tsp instant yeast
½ tsp salt
180ml (6fl oz) milk
1 tsp pandan extract
25g (1oz) honey
45g (1½oz) beaten egg
30g (1oz) unsalted butter,
at room temperature
1 egg beaten with 1½ tbsp milk,
for the egg wash
2 tbsp desiccated coconut

a large baking tray, greased

Put the gula Melaka, pandan leaves and 100ml (3½fl oz) water into a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Cook this over a medium heat until the gula Melaka has melted completely and the syrup has thickened. Strain the leaves out of the syrup and allow to cool.

Add the cooled gula Melaka syrup, one tablespoon at a time, to the grated coconut and stir until the coconut is well coated. Place this in the fridge until needed.

Place all the remaining ingredients, except the butter, egg wash and desiccated coconut, into a mixing bowl. Mix with the dough hook attachment of your mixer, or by hand, until a dough is formed. Add the butter and continue to knead until the dough has reached windowpane stage (see page 10).

Shape the dough into a ball and place it in a lightly oiled bowl. Spray the dough with a little water and cover the bowl with a damp towel. Place the bowl into the oven set very low at 35°C/95°F, or in a warm and dry place to allow the dough to double in size.

Punch the dough down to remove any bubbles. Divide the dough into 12 portions and roll each into a ball. On a lightly floured surface, roll each ball into a disc about 10cm (4in) in diameter. Place 1–2 tablespoons of the grated coconut mixture into the middle of each disc. Bring the edges together and pinch to seal, then turn the buns over so that the seal is hidden underneath. Arrange on the prepared baking tray about 2cm (¾in) apart.

Spray the buns lightly with water and allow them to prove (see page 10) for about 50 minutes in a 35°C/95°F oven, or in a warm and dry place.

Preheat the oven to 170°C/325°F/Gas Mark 3.

Brush the buns with the egg wash. Scatter over the desiccated coconut, and bake for 17–20 minutes, or until the buns are golden brown. Transfer the buns to a wire rack to cool completely.



Lemon Butter Cake

A good butter cake recipe can take on most flavours. I like to add some lemon zest to mine to give it a sharp citrusy flavour. And there's no better way to enjoy eating it than with a nice piping hot cuppa!

SERVES
10

280g (10oz) unsalted butter,
at room temperature
185g (6½oz) caster sugar
5 eggs
1 tsp lemon extract
260g (9¼oz) cake flour, sifted
zest of 1 lemon
1 tsp baking powder, sifted
½ tsp salt
75ml (5 tbsp) milk
2½ tsp lemon juice

a 20cm (8in) Bundt tin, well
greased

Preheat the oven to 170°C/325°F/Gas Mark 3.

In a mixing bowl, cream together the butter and sugar until the mixture turns light and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, and mix until well combined. Beat in the lemon extract.

In a separate bowl, mix together the flour, lemon zest, baking powder and salt. Fold half of the flour mixture into the egg batter, followed by the milk and lemon juice, then fold in the remaining flour mixture.

Pour the batter into the prepared Bundt pan and tap the pan lightly on the kitchen counter to remove the bigger air bubbles (see page 10). Bake for 40–45 minutes, or until a skewer inserted towards the centre of the cake comes out clean. Leave to cool in the pan for 5 minutes before turning out onto a wire rack to cool completely.

DIANA'S TIP

Use the best butter you can find to make butter cake as the flavour of a good quality butter really shines through.





— CHAPTER THREE —
**TEATIME
SAVOURIES**



Spiced Zucchini, Tomato and Onion Bake

I always keep a pot of my homemade spice rub to hand in the cupboard. Rub it on chicken or fish, or sprinkle it over vegetables – it will add a bit of oomph to just about anything.

SERVES
4-6

2 onions, sliced
1 green zucchini (courgette), sliced
1 yellow zucchini (courgette), sliced
4 tomatoes, sliced
300g (10½oz) fresh mozzarella, sliced
2 tbsp chopped fresh dill
ground black pepper

For the spice rub

3 tbsp garlic powder
3 tbsp onion powder
1 tbsp smoked paprika
1 tsp mustard powder
1 tsp cayenne or chilli powder (optional)
2 tsp salt
1 tsp coarsely ground black pepper

a 20 x 20cm (8 x 8in) baking pan,
lightly greased

First make the spice mix by whisking together all the spice rub ingredients. Transfer to an airtight container – the spice rub will keep for up to 3 months.

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.

Scatter the onions on the bottom of the prepared baking pan and layer the zucchini, tomatoes and mozzarella on top. Sprinkle over some spice mix, dill and black pepper. Bake in the preheated oven for 35–40 minutes or until the vegetables have softened, and serve.

DIANA'S TIP

It really pays to use ripe and juicy tomatoes as they add a lovely sweetness to the dish.



Meatballs with Pesto Mushroom Sauce

These meatballs are gorgeously moist (no dry meatballs for me, thank you!), and they are also a great solution when you need to cobble a meal together last minute. Bake a batch of them in advance and store in the freezer until needed. Serve them with rice or pasta.

SERVES

4

For the meatballs

2 slices bread, roughly torn
130ml (4fl oz) milk
500g (1lb 2 oz) minced beef,
chicken or pork
½ onion, minced
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 egg
35g (1¼oz) Parmesan cheese, grated
2 tsp fresh oregano, chopped
salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the sauce

30g (1oz) butter
½ onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, crushed
200g (7oz) button mushrooms, sliced
120ml (4fl oz) dry white wine
260ml (9½fl oz) chicken or
vegetable stock
60ml (2fl oz) cream or milk
3 tbsp pesto sauce
1 tsp salt
½ tsp coarsely ground black pepper
1 tbsp chopped Italian parsley

a baking tray, greased and lined

To make the meatballs, whizz the bread in a food processor until you have very fine breadcrumbs. Transfer the breadcrumbs to a small bowl, pour the milk on top, and leave the bread to soak up the milk for 15 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.

Mix together the minced meat, onion, garlic, egg, Parmesan cheese, and some salt and pepper in a large mixing bowl. Pour in the bread and milk mixture, add the oregano and mix until well combined.

Take a small amount of the mixture in your hand and roll it into a ball, about the size of a golf ball. Continue to use up all the mixture – you should be able to make about 30 balls. Arrange the meatballs on the prepared baking tray and bake for 14–15 minutes, or until the meatballs are golden brown and the juices run clear.

Meanwhile, make the sauce. Melt the butter in a skillet, add the onion and cook for about 5 minutes, or until the onion is soft and translucent. Add the garlic and continue cooking for 30 seconds more. Add the mushrooms and cook until they are soft and wilted. Pour in the white wine, and cook over a high heat, scraping the bottom of the pan to prevent any burning, until almost all the wine has evaporated. Pour in the stock, cream and pesto and stir to combine.

Carefully drop the meatballs into the sauce and let them simmer for about 15–20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the sauce has thickened. Season well with salt and pepper and lastly, stir in the parsley and serve immediately.

DIANA'S TIP

If you are using frozen meatballs, there is no need to thaw the meatballs. Simply drop them into the sauce and simmer until the meatballs are warm.





— CHAPTER FOUR —
**CHILDREN'S
PARTIES**

Easy Ham and Cheese Pinwheels

Ham and cheese is always such a popular combination. Wrap them in some puff pastry and the result is beautiful pinwheel rolls that taste as good as they look.

MAKES
12

2 sheets ready-rolled puff pastry, thawed if frozen
150ml (5fl oz) tomato purée
12 slices ham
150g (5½oz) Cheddar cheese, grated
2 tsp dried Italian herbs
1 egg, beaten
freshly ground black pepper

a large baking tray, greased and lined

Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6.

Lay one sheet of puff pastry, with a short end nearest to you, on a lightly floured work surface, and brush with the tomato purée. Lay half of the ham on the pastry and scatter cheese and herbs evenly over the top. Season well with pepper. Repeat with the other pastry sheet.

Starting from the end closest to you, roll the pastry away from you as tightly as possible, finishing with the roll seam-side down on the work surface. Cut the roll into 6 equal pieces. Repeat with the other pastry sheet so you end up with 12 pinwheels.

Lay each pinwheel, cut side up, on the prepared baking tray. Brush the sides and tops of the pinwheels with the beaten egg, and bake for about 12–14 minutes, or until the pastry has turned golden brown. Allow to cool for a few minutes before serving, or serve cold.



Strawberry Chiffon Cupcakes

My daughter wanted everything to be pink on her third birthday, so I developed a simple recipe that combined her two loves – the colour pink and Oreos. The result? Light and fluffy chiffon cakes fit for a princess!

MAKES
12

For the sponge

4 eggs, separated
35g (1¼oz) icing sugar, sifted
40ml (1¼fl oz) vegetable oil
40ml (1¼fl oz) strawberry milk
1 tsp vanilla extract
75g (2½oz) cake flour, sifted
2–3 drops red or pink food colouring (optional)
¼ tsp cream of tartar
100g (3½oz) caster sugar
4 Oreos, filling removed and crushed

For the topping

200ml (7fl oz) cold whipping cream
1 tbsp icing sugar
80g (2¾oz) strawberry jam
2 Oreos, filling removed and crushed

a 12-hole muffin tray, lined with paper cases
a piping bag fitted with a fluted nozzle

Preheat the oven to 160°C/320°F/Gas Mark 3.

First make the sponges. In a mixing bowl, beat together the egg yolks and icing sugar for about 2 minutes, until blended. Add the vegetable oil, followed by the strawberry milk and vanilla extract and continue beating. Add the cake flour and mix until just combined. At this point, add red or pink food colouring to get the desired colour (if using).

In a clean mixing bowl, whisk the egg whites until foamy then add the cream of tartar. Continue whisking until soft peaks form, then gradually add the sugar and continue whisking until stiff peaks form.

Transfer a third of the meringue into the bowl with the egg yolk mixture and mix. Very gently, fold in the remaining meringue and the crushed Oreos in two stages. Fold until no white streaks remain and you have an even mixture.

Divide the mixture into the cupcake liners, filling each about two-thirds full. Bake in the preheated oven for 18–20 minutes, or until the tops are golden brown and the cakes have puffed up. Remove from the oven and allow the cakes to cool completely. As they cool, they may sink.

While the cakes cool, make the icing by whisking the cream and icing sugar together in a large bowl until stiff peaks form. Gently fold in the strawberry jam, then spoon the cream into the piping bag and pipe a swirl onto each of the cooled cupcakes.

Sprinkle over the crushed Oreos, then chill the cupcakes for at least 2 hours before serving.



Milo Puddings

I'll always remember the Milo trucks magically appearing at my school when it was Sports Day. It made the event so much more worthwhile! Luckily for me, my family are just as Milo-mad as I am, so these puddings are always a welcome malty treat – party or no party!

MAKES
12

250g (9oz) unsalted butter, softened
60g (2oz) caster sugar
3 eggs
1½ tsp vanilla extract
260g (9¼oz) cake flour, sifted
250g (9oz) Milo powder, sifted
1½ tsp baking powder, sifted
¾ tsp baking soda (bicarbonate of soda), sifted
½ tsp salt
240ml (8½fl oz) buttermilk
vanilla ice cream, to serve
sprinkles, to decorate

*two 6-hole dessert shell tins,
well greased*

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.

In a mixing bowl, cream the butter with the sugar until the mixture turns light and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, and beat until well combined. Beat in the vanilla extract.

In a separate bowl, mix together the flour, Milo, baking powder and soda, and salt. Fold half of the flour mixture into the egg mixture, followed by the buttermilk, stirring after each addition, then add the remaining flour mixture, and mix until just combined. Spoon the batter evenly into the holes of the baking tray so they're about two-thirds full.

Bake in the preheated oven for 15–20 minutes until a skewer inserted into the centre of a cake comes out clean. Let the cakes cool in the pan for 5–10 minutes before turning out on a wire rack to cool completely. Top with a generous dollop of ice cream and sprinkles before serving.

DIANA'S TIP

You can also bake the puddings in a regular muffin pan.



Easy Chocolate Cuppies

This is another recipe to get the kids involved in. It's what I call a 'dump cake' recipe because you literally dump everything in a mixing bowl, stir and bake! Let the little ones do all the work while you get yourself ready for the party.

MAKES
12

125g (4½oz) plain or cake flour, sifted
50g (1¾oz) cocoa powder, sifted
¾ tsp baking soda (bicarbonate of soda), sifted
150g (5½oz) caster sugar
180ml (6fl oz) chocolate milk
65g (2¼oz) unsalted butter
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 egg

For the topping

50g (1¾oz) cocoa powder
1 small portion Swiss Meringue Buttercream (see recipe on page 189)
sprinkles, to decorate (optional)

a 12-hole muffin tray, lined with paper cases
a piping bag fitted with a fluted nozzle

Place all the ingredients, except the eggs into a mixing bowl. Beat for 1 minute, then add the egg and beat until well blended. Divide the batter between the liners in the muffin tray, filling each about two-thirds full.

Bake in the preheated oven for about 18–20 minutes, or until an inserted skewer emerges cleanly. Let the cakes cool in the pan for 5–10 minutes before transferring onto a wire rack to cool completely.

To make the topping, fold the cocoa powder into the buttercream until well distributed. Transfer the buttercream to the piping bag, and pipe onto the cupcakes. Add sprinkles before serving, if wished.





— CHAPTER FIVE —

CELEBRATION CAKES

Mile-High Chocolate Cake

My husband's favourite cake is undoubtedly chocolate cake – and a cake that's a match for himself in height is best according to Max. So I always go tall for his birthday and bake him a towering eight layers of chocolate cake smothered in a chocolate buttercream and topped off with a glossy ganache drip.

SERVES
16

410g (14½oz) plain or cake flour, sifted
160g (5½oz) cocoa powder, sifted
3½ tsp baking powder, sifted
2 tsp baking soda (bicarbonate of soda), sifted
2 tsp salt
210g (7½oz) soft brown sugar
3 eggs
450ml (16fl oz) buttermilk
225ml (7¾fl oz) vegetable oil
2 tsp vanilla extract
450ml (16fl oz) boiling water
1 tbsp instant espresso powder

To decorate

230g (8½oz) dark chocolate, melted and cooled, plus 100g (3½oz) dark chocolate, chopped, for the ganache
1–2 tbsp cocoa powder, sifted
1 large portion Swiss Meringue Buttercream (see recipe on page 189)
100ml (3½fl oz) heavy (double) cream
200g (7oz) raspberries

four 15cm (6in) round cake tins, greased and bases-lined

Preheat the oven to 170°C/325°F/Gas Mark 3.

Place the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, salt and sugar into a mixing bowl. Whisk at a low speed to combine. Add the eggs, buttermilk, oil and vanilla extract and mix until well combined.

In a small bowl, whisk together the boiling water and instant espresso powder. Slowly pour this into the mixing bowl and mix at a low speed until all the ingredients are combined.

Divide the batter equally among the cake tins and bake in the preheated oven for about 45–50 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the centre of a cake comes out clean. Let the cakes cool in the pans for 5 minutes before turning out onto a wire rack to cool completely.

Once cool, cut each cake horizontally in half (see page 11). Fold the melted dark chocolate and cocoa into the buttercream. Sandwich the cake layers together using half of the buttercream. Then frost the sides and top of the cake with the remaining buttercream. Chill the cake for 30 minutes.

To make the chocolate ganache, in a heavy-bottomed saucepan, heat the cream until almost boiling. Place the chopped dark chocolate into a bowl. Pour the cream onto the chocolate and leave for 5 minutes. Using a spatula, stir until all the chocolate has melted and mixed into the cream. Cool the ganache before pouring on the cake. Use a small spoon to push some of the ganache over the sides of the top of the cake to form drips. Top with the raspberries before serving.



Almond and Elderflower Cake

My light and summery cake with a moist, elderflower- and almond-infused sponge is perfect as a Mother's Day treat, picnic centrepiece or any summer celebration.

SERVES
16

270g (9½oz) unsalted butter
150g (5½oz) caster sugar, plus
50g (1¾oz) for the syrup
5 eggs
2 tsp almond extract
315g (11oz) plain or cake flour
1½ tsp baking powder
90ml (3fl oz) elderflower cordial

To decorate

finely grated zest of 1 lemon
1 small portion Swiss Meringue
Buttercream (see recipe on
page 189)
1–2 drops pink food colouring
a sugar flower, to decorate
(optional)

two 15cm (6in) cake tins,
greased and lined
an icing scaper

Preheat the oven to 170°C/325°F/Gas Mark 3.

Beat together the butter and sugar in a mixing bowl for about 5–6 minutes, or until the mixture is pale and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition, then mix in the almond extract.

Sift together the flour and baking powder, then fold half of it into the batter, followed by the elderflower cordial. Fold in the remaining flour and baking powder until just mixed. Pour the batter evenly into the prepared cake tins and spread the mixture level.

Bake the cakes for 30–35 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the centre of a cake comes out clean. Let the cakes cool in the tins on a wire rack for 5 minutes, before turning out onto the rack to cool completely. Once cool, slice each cake in half horizontally (see page 11).

To make a simple sugar syrup, put the 50g (1¾oz) sugar in a heavy-based saucepan with 50ml (1¾fl oz) water and stir over a medium heat until the sugar has dissolved. Set aside to cool completely.

Fold the lemon zest into the buttercream until well distributed. Brush each cake layer generously with the sugar syrup, then sandwich the cakes together using one-third of the buttercream.

Use another one-third of the buttercream to frost the sides and top of the cake. To the remaining buttercream, add 1–2 drops of pink food colouring and stir until well combined. Smear the pink buttercream all over the sides of the cake and smooth with an icing scaper to almost blend the pink buttercream into the white buttercream, creating a watercolour effect. Top with the sugar flower, if using.



Delicate Bandung Chiffon Cake

The fragrant rose flavour of bandung is filled with nostalgia for me as I grew up enjoying the popular (and very sweet) bandung drink of rose syrup and milk. It goes wonderfully in a simple, light and airy chiffon cake, wrapped in layers of rose whipped cream and finished with a sprinkling of crunchy pistachios and dried raspberries.

SERVES
16

40ml (1½fl oz) vegetable oil
65g (2¼oz) cake flour, sifted
¼ tsp baking powder, sifted
¼ tsp salt
1 tbsp bandung cordial
35ml (1¼fl oz) evaporated milk
4 eggs, 3 of them separated
¼ tsp cream of tartar
30g (1oz) caster sugar

To decorate

300ml (10½fl oz) heavy (double) cream
1 tbsp icing sugar, sifted
1 tsp rosewater extract
2–3 drops pink food colouring
20g (¾oz) pistachios, chopped
20g (¾oz) dried raspberries, crushed

a 20cm (8in) round cake tin,
greased and lined

Preheat the oven to 170°C/325°F/Gas Mark 3.

Heat the oil in a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Add the flour, baking powder and salt and whisk until well mixed. Pour the mixture into a mixing bowl.

Add the bandung cordial and evaporated milk and continue mixing. Gradually add 1 whole egg and 3 egg yolks, mixing until the mixture is smooth. Set aside.

In a clean mixing bowl, whisk the 3 egg whites until foamy. Add the cream of tartar and continue whisking until soft peaks form. Gradually add the sugar, whisking continuously until firm peaks form. Beat one-third of the meringue into the batter to loosen the mixture, then gently fold in the remaining meringue until no white streaks remain.

Pour the batter into the prepared cake tin and bake in a water bath (see page 12) in the oven for 40 minutes until golden on top. Let the cake cool in the tin on a wire rack for 5 minutes before turning out onto the rack to cool completely.

Place a mixing bowl and whisk in the freezer for 15 minutes (see page 11). Put the cream and icing sugar in the chilled mixing bowl and whisk until firm peaks form. Add the rosewater extract and continue whisking until stiff peaks form. Gently fold in the pink food colouring.

Frost the cake with the whipped cream and decorate with chopped pistachios and crushed dried raspberries.



Raspberry Meringue Torte

This is crunchy and gooey, with sweet-tart raspberries all in one bite – it doesn't get much more indulgent than this.

SERVES
16

6 egg whites
250g (9oz) caster sugar
1½ tsp white wine vinegar
2 tsp vanilla extract
220g (7¾oz) ground almonds

To decorate

200ml (7fl oz) heavy (double) cream
2 tbsp icing sugar
600g (14oz) raspberries

2 large baking trays, lined
2 large piping bags fitted with large round nozzles

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.

In a large mixing bowl, whisk the egg whites until foamy. Slowly add the sugar and continue whisking until medium peaks form. Add the vinegar and vanilla extract and whisk until stiff peaks form.

Carefully fold the almonds into the meringue, then spoon it into one of the piping bags. Pipe 5 equal outlines of circles of about 14–15cm (5½–6in) diameter onto the prepared baking trays, filling in each outline to create 5 even discs of meringue. Bake for 1 hour and 10 minutes before turning off the oven, leaving the meringues in the cooling oven until completely cold.

Place a mixing bowl and whisk in the freezer for 30 minutes (see page 11). Put the cream and icing sugar in the chilled mixing bowl and whisk at a high speed until the cream has reached stiff peaks.

Spoon the whipped cream into a second piping bag. Place a meringue on a piece of cake board or a serving plate. Pipe a layer of cream on the meringue, leaving a border around the edge. Dot with raspberries. Place another meringue on top and repeat, piping with the cream and dotting with raspberries. Repeat three more times, until all the meringues are stacked and the top is piped with cream, too. Decorate with the remaining raspberries.



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