

MUMM'S

BAM!
WHAM!

OH NO!



not



COOKING!



POOF!!

DENISE FLETCHER

WHAT?!



FAVOURITE

slurp!

RECIPES



—for the—

PLAIN

zzzz

NEAR

huhh?

CLUELESS

OR

LAZY

MUM'S NOT COOKING

MUMS
not
COOKING!

FAVOURITE SINGAPOREAN RECIPES
FOR THE NEAR CLUELESS OR PLAIN LAZY

DENISE FLETCHER

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EPIGRAM BOOKS / SINGAPORE

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DEDICATED TO:

My three boys,

my mother,

Every mother, and every child,

Linda,

LQ—my tiny Canuck,

Alikatt, Laz, Cameron and

Nadia.

INTRODUCTION

As a mother of three boys, I understand the anxiety of letting go and watching from a distance. We think our children cannot get by without our care. It matters not, whether that child is seven or twenty-two. Our child remains our child and in our minds, helpless, even when they tower over us.

I remember as a newlywed, finding myself suddenly thrust into the role of keeper of all things and provider of nourishment for my husband, I was overwhelmed and didn't know where to begin! Vacuuming and laundry was one thing; putting entire meals on the table for my husband, whose culinary expectations I was just beginning to grasp, was another. I kept calling my mum at all and sometimes odd hours, asking how to select this ingredient or how to cook that dish. Bless her patience!

Spurred by these experiences, I wrote this book to allay the fears of parents, inspire confidence in students about to leave home and country and dive into independence, and guide newlyweds (or anyone else!) who want to cook our beloved local dishes, but haven't a clue where to begin.

It's an exciting time, but it can also be a fearful one. Whatever you do, you'll need to eat, so the recipes here are simple and clear, the ingredients easy to find and the results dependably delicious and, where possible, healthy. Many local favourites are here,

simplified, so you can focus on the important stuff—your books, your future, your budding career, your shiny new marriage! If you start to miss home or mum's cooking, I hope you will find a dependable resource and a fount of comfort, between the covers of this book.

Cooking, while often viewed as a lesser ability, is peerless in inspiring confidence, developing organisation, management and budgeting skills, and encouraging creativity and imagination. The ability to cook means you will be surrounded by friends, willing dish washers, and, you will never go hungry. The love for cooking will provide an invaluable outlet for busting stress, something that, unfortunately at this juncture, you will know only too well. Sure, there's always pizza delivery, McDonald's or Chinese take-out. But, seriously, how much pizza or take-out can you eat?

I hope this book will become your kitchen companion and a voice that reassures you as your mother might, when you have questions and doubts. Good luck on your journey of learning and living, and one last thing; don't forget to eat something every now and then!

DENISE FLETCHER



BREAKFAST AND SNACKS

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BREAKFAST PIZZA

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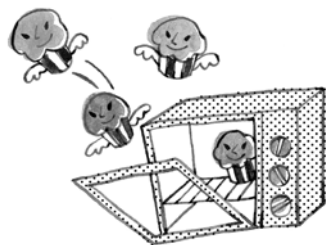
LOBAH

BREAKFAST BANANA MUFFINS

Prep 15 mins | Cook 20 mins | Makes 10 small muffins

The secret to fluffy, featherlight muffins is to mix or stir the ingredients with the absolute minimum number of strokes. Follow the instructions implicitly and you will be rewarded with moist, tender and fragrant muffins, so light, they might float out the window on a windy day!

150 G (1½ LOOSELY PACKED CUPS) PLAIN FLOUR
100 G (¾ LOOSELY PACKED CUP) CASTOR SUGAR
1 TSP BAKING SODA
70 ML (½ CUP) LIGHT VEGETABLE OIL
130 ML (⅔ CUP) BUTTERMILK OR
THIN UNSWEETENED PLAIN YOGHURT
1 TSP VANILLA EXTRACT
1 LARGE VERY RIPE CAVENDISH BANANA,
FINELY MASHED WITH A FORK



1. Preheat the oven at 185°C. Line the muffin tray with muffin paper cases.
2. In a large, dry bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar and baking soda.
3. Make a well in the centre of the flour and add the oil, buttermilk, vanilla extract and banana.
4. Quickly and lightly give a few stirs with the whisk. **Do not over mix.**
5. Put one generous ice cream scoop of batter in each of the muffin cases and bake for 20 minutes or until well risen and golden and your kitchen smells delicious.
6. Serve warm with coffee, tea or milk.

Cavendish bananas are the most commonly found bananas in supermarkets. They tend to be large with thick peels, have sweet mild flesh and a relatively mild banana fragrance. The most prevalent brand is Del Monte.

If you use regular milk instead of buttermilk or yoghurt, you will not get the same light texture as baking soda works best to aerate and lighten the batter by reacting with the acids in buttermilk or yoghurt. If you cannot get buttermilk or yoghurt, add 1½ tablespoons of white or cider vinegar to an equivalent amount of regular milk.

To make a vegan version, substitute milk with water, rice milk, oat milk or soy milk soured with 1½ tablespoons of vinegar.

The soured milk or liquid can also be replaced with 2 teaspoons of cream of tartar added to the flour along with the baking soda. In which case, use milk of your choice or water for the liquid in the recipe.

BREAKFAST PIZZA

Prep 10 mins | Cook 15 mins | Serves 1

Mornings can be brutal; mental exhaustion and sleep deprivation don't make it easier. Few can face the prospect of a hot, freshly cooked breakfast, if there's no one to cook for you and when getting out of bed already feels like a task. Still, you'll need to get something substantial in your belly to kick start your gears for the long day ahead. Having frozen pizza bases and a few other kitchen essentials on hand means you'll never be out of eating options, especially when you're rushed, ravenous or just too knackered to do anything but the bare basics in the kitchen.

1 SMALL FROZEN PIZZA BASE (STRAIGHT FROM THE FREEZER)
2 RASHERS BACON, SLICED OR CUT WITH SCISSORS ANY WAY YOU WISH
1 EGG
AS MUCH GRATED CHEESE AS YOU LIKE (PARMESAN, MOZZARELLA OR A MIXTURE OF BOTH)
PINCH OF SALT
PINCH OF PEPPER

1. Preheat the oven at 190°C. If using a pizza toaster or toaster oven, preheat by turning the timer knob to 30 minutes position and put the dish in when the timer reaches 20 minutes.
2. Put the pizza base on an ovenproof plate. Top evenly with bacon slices and break the egg over the centre of the base.
3. Season with salt and pepper, scatter the cheese over and carefully transfer to the oven, ensuring that the egg doesn't spill over the edge.
4. Bake for 15 – 20 minutes or until the base is golden and crisp, the egg is done to your liking and the cheese is melted and golden.
5. Remove from oven and serve immediately. Take care when eating as the plate will be extremely hot.

My suggested toppings are what I feel would be easiest for days when you're rushed or exhausted. Feel free to use whatever else you prefer or have in your kitchen. (Examples are tomato slices, cheese slices, sausages, leftover shredded roast chicken, leftover curried meat, canned tuna, cooked spicy beans, peas, lentils, etc.)

LAZY HAM AND EGG BREAKFAST

Prep 5 mins | Cook 15 mins | Serves 1

I can't think of any breakfast easier than this, and I am a pretty lazy cook, always on the lookout for a quick and easy way out. You can vary the additions to the eggs. Try snipped bacon, diced tomato or cubed cheese. The important thing is to coat the inside of the dish really well with butter, for flavour, so you don't end up wasting your precious few minutes in the morning, wrestling the stuck eggs out of the dish.

A GENEROUS TBSP VERY SOFT BUTTER

1 LARGE SLICE HAM, DICED OR JUST RIPPED

WITH YOUR FINGERS

1 SLICE BREAD, DICED OR JUST RIPPED

WITH YOUR FINGERS

2 LARGE EGGS

PINCH OF SALT

PINCH OF PEPPER

1. Preheat the oven at 200°C.
2. Generously butter the inside of a small oval or rectangular baking dish.
3. Scatter the ham and bread evenly over the base.
4. Break the eggs over the ham and bread.
5. Sprinkle generously with salt and pepper.
6. Dot the surface with the butter and bake for 15 minutes or until the eggs are cooked to your liking.
7. Remove the dish from the oven and eat.

SOY SAUCE AND PEPPER FRIED EGGS

Prep 2 mins | Cook 5 mins | Serves 1

These could not be simpler, but are sublimely delicious, especially on soft buttered bread. My boys can't get enough of these admittedly messy but addictively delicious eggs. Prepare to meet your next food obsession. They're not just for breakfast either. Left to their own devices, my boys will happily cook lots of these eggs and eat them with rice for a simple but nourishing and satisfying lunch or dinner.

1 TBSP VEGETABLE OIL

1 LARGE KNOB BUTTER

2 EGGS (OR MORE)

A GENEROUS DASH DARK OR LIGHT SOY SAUCE

(I PREFER LIGHT BUT TRY BOTH AND

SEE FOR YOURSELF)

A GENEROUS PINCH GROUND BLACK PEPPER

1. Heat the oil together with the butter in a small pan.
2. When the butter melts and the mixture is moderately hot, break in the eggs and cook until the whites start to turn cloudy.
3. Add the soy sauce all over the eggs and follow with the pepper.
4. Allow the whites to set partially, then lightly stir the yolks and gently stir around to distribute the pepper and soy sauce but do not scramble the eggs.
5. Gently flip the eggs over and cook the other side for about 30 seconds.
6. Remove from the pan and drain off excess oil before serving immediately.

I know I'm supposed to encourage you to eat healthy, but you know what? That gunky butter/oil/soy sauce mix in the pan is insanely good mopped up with bread, especially buttered, cottony soft bread. Oh my! I won't tell your mum, if you don't...

CORNE BEEF AND EGG BREAKFAST HASH

Prep 10 mins | Cook 15 mins | Serves 4

This was my grandmother's weekend breakfast staple, with crusty bread and piping hot coffee. Leftovers, if any, were tossed into a wok, along with cold cooked rice and sliced spring onions, to make a very tasty, speedy and satisfying lunch. The reason I've given a recipe to feed four is that it makes little sense to cook half a can of corned beef and have the other half languishing and crusting over in the back of the fridge. Besides, with the suggestion for fried rice above and the possibility of luscious corned beef stuffed sandwiches in the offing, why would you want to cook half of anything?

4 TBSP VEGETABLE OIL
1 LARGE ONION, PEELED, HALVED
AND THICKLY SLICED
2-4 RED CHILLIES, THICKLY SLICED
1 CAN CORNE BEEF
3-4 EGGS
PINCH OF SALT
PINCH OF GROUND BLACK PEPPER
LIME WEDGES (OPTIONAL)

1. Heat 3 tablespoons of the vegetable oil in a pan and sauté the onion until light brown but still crunchy.
2. Add the chillies and stir to heat through.
3. Break up the corned beef and add to the pan, stirring and mixing with the onion and chilli until the corned beef begins to get crusty.
4. Push the corned beef mixture to the side of the pan and the remaining oil to the pan.
5. Break the eggs into the pan and allow to partially set before scrambling lightly.
6. Combine the corned beef and eggs and stir until well mixed and eggs are done to your preference.
7. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
8. Divide the hash among four plates. Garnish each serving with a lime wedge, if you wish and serve hot with bread.

CHAI TOW KWAY

Prep 15 mins | Cook 15 mins | Serves 2 (well, actually 1... twice)

This delectable dish seems to truly stump western culinary sensibilities and the inevitable question, "But where's the carrot?!" Well, it's radish really, sweet, succulent radish or daikon. Finding the kind of radish rice cake used in traditional versions can be tricky, but when desperation strikes, you do the best you can. Your best bet would be Asian grocers, especially Vietnamese, Japanese or Korean ones or the Asian foods section in larger supermarkets. The legwork will be all worthwhile.

5 TBSP VEGETABLE OIL
300 G (1 PACKET) ASIAN RICE CAKE, CUT INTO SMALL CUBES
4 CLOVES GARLIC, BASHED, SKINS DISCARDED AND ROUGHLY CHOPPED
2 TBSP CHOPPED CHAI POH OR PICKLED RADISH (JAPANESE OR KOREAN)
1-2 TBSP PREPARED CHILLI PASTE (OPTIONAL)
1 TBSP LIGHT SOY SAUCE
PINCH OF SALT
PINCH OF PEPPER
2 EGGS, LIGHTLY BEATEN
1 STALK SPRING ONION WASHED, AND CUT INTO SHORT LENGTHS

1. Heat 2 tablespoons vegetable oil in a large shallow pan and when really hot, fry the rice cake cubes, stirring and turning them over so they brown evenly. Remove the rice cakes from the pan and set aside.
2. Heat another 3 tablespoons of oil in same pan and fry the garlic and pickled radish until light brown.
3. Add the chilli paste and cook until the oil seeps out, then add the rice cakes, soy sauce, salt and pepper and stir until well mixed.
4. Push the rice cakes to one side of the pan and pour in the eggs. Allow to set partially, then push the rice cakes over the eggs and stir and turn until the rice cakes are coated with eggs.
5. Add the spring onions and stir for a few more minutes until the eggs are completely cooked.
6. Dish out and serve immediately.

If you can't get Malaysia or Singapore style rice cake flavoured with grated radish, or yam (taro), use the Vietnamese or Korean versions. These rice cakes may be plain or flavoured with yam, carrot, radish or pumpkin. Any type you can find will work as long as it's fresh rice cake, not dehydrated versions.

If you cannot find chilli paste, use Korean gochujang. Other possibilities are Hainanese chicken rice chilli sauce or Indonesian sambal oelek. I prefer gochujang as some versions of Hainanese chilli sauces or Indonesian sambals available in the west can be dicy in terms of flavour.

ROTI JOHN**BEEF AND EGG TOPPED FRIED BREAD***Prep 15 mins | Cook 10 mins | Serves 2*

Once upon a time, when Singapore was still a British colony, an English serviceman walked up to a hawker, and hankering for something closer to the food of his homeland, requested some bread and beef. Something probably got garbled in translation and what emerged was a split French loaf topped with a tasty mess of egg, minced beef and onion. We'll never know if it really was what the homesick Englishman actually wanted (or if this story is even true) but it was said that he seemed mightily pleased with it and wolfed it down happily. In honour of British servicemen in Singapore at the time, who were all referred to as "John" by locals, as apparently, one Englishman looked pretty much like another, the creation was christened "roti john" (John's bread). The rest, as they say, is oh, so delicious history.

1 LOAF BAGUETTE (30 CM LONG)**100 G MINCED BEEF****1 ONION, PEELED AND COARSELY CHOPPED****1 GREEN CHILLI, COARSELY CHOPPED****(OPTIONAL)****½ TSP GROUND BLACK PEPPER****½ TSP SALT****2 LARGE EGGS****1-2 TBSP OIL**

1. Vertically cut the loaf down the middle so you have two pieces, each measuring 15 cm, which can easily fit most pans. Horizontally split each half but do not cut through. The halves should open out like butterflies but still be attached together.
2. In a mixing bowl, combine the beef, onion, chilli, pepper, salt and eggs and stir until thoroughly combined.
3. Heat the oil in a well seasoned griddle or non-stick pan, until moderately hot.
4. Scoop up the egg and beef mixture and spread onto the cut surface of loaf halves, right up to the edges.
5. Quickly flip the bread over onto pan so that the beef and egg mixture is face down. Press down firmly with a spatula so that the topping sticks to bread, and cook until fragrant and edges are brown. This should take about 5 minutes over medium heat.
6. Slide the spatula carefully under the bread, scraping gently, until the bread loosens. Flip over and cook on the other side, again pressing down with the spatula so that the other side crisps up evenly.
7. Remove from the pan and close the two halves together so the egg and beef topping are now inside the bread.
8. Cool slightly, then cut each closed piece into 4 or 5 slices.
9. Serve immediately with sweet Thai chilli sauce or a mixture of half ketchup and half chilli sauce.



CHINESE PUMPKIN CAKE

Prep 20 mins | Cook 20 mins | Serves 4

I wish pumpkin puree were as easy to find in Singapore; making this would be so much easier! This is so much faster in the microwave, but you have to be watchful as mere minutes separate a successful pumpkin cake from a slab of yellow rubber. Do this when you're free on a Sunday, so you have a yummy breakfast waiting for you over the next few weekday mornings.

125 G (1¼ CUPS) RICE FLOUR

400 ML (2 CUPS) WATER

3 TBSP VEGETABLE OIL

4 CLOVES GARLIC, BASHED, SKINS DISCARDED AND ROUGHLY CHOPPED

A GENEROUS HANDFUL SMALL DRIED PRAWNS

½ TSP PEPPER

60 G (½ CUP) CANNED BUTTON MUSHROOMS, DRAINED AND SLICED

1 RED CHILLI, SLICED

250 G (1½ CUPS) CANNED UNSWEETENED PUMPKIN PUREE

1½ TSP SALT

1 STALK SPRING ONION WASHED AND SLICED

Drizzle sesame oil, sweet thick dark soy sauce and chilli garlic oil (page 72) over the pumpkin cake, then sprinkle with toasted sesame seeds before eating, if you wish.

Instead of microwaving, you could also steam this over boiling water, after pouring into the dish and covering the top with cling wrap. Steaming normally takes about 45 minutes.

1. Line a 23 cm ceramic pie dish with cling wrap, with generous overhang.
2. Combine the rice flour and water in a large bowl or measuring jug and stir until very smooth, then set aside.
3. Heat the vegetable oil in a large pan or wok. Add the garlic, prawns and pepper and fry until fragrant.
4. Add the mushrooms and chilli and stir for a few minutes.
5. Add the pumpkin puree and stir to combine with the other ingredients. Keep stirring until the puree thickens.
6. Stir the rice flour mixture and pour into the pan of pumpkin puree.
7. Add the salt and spring onions and stir until the mixture is thick and sticky.
8. Pour the mixture into the pie dish and level the top with a spatula. Cover the bowl loosely with more cling wrap, making sure the overhang is still outside the dish.
9. Cook in a microwave on "Medium" for 10–15 minutes or until it is firm to the touch.
10. Remove and leave to cool completely before lifting out using the plastic overhang. Slice and serve.

GERAGOK FRITTERS

KRILL FRITTERS

Prep 15 mins | Cook 10 mins | Makes 16–18

These are fantastic as afternoon snacks with tea or coffee though I grew up eating them piled over steaming hot rice and doused liberally with a hot and tangy chilli and vinegar sauce. Any true blue Singaporean Kristang (Portuguese descended Eurasian) will know what I'm talking about, but you will not find these easily outside of a Kristang home. Geragok is also an unflattering way of addressing a Portuguese Eurasian in the local context, which came about through association with the krill fishermen of Malacca, who were mostly Portuguese Eurasians. These days, though, the term is generally used and taken in good humour.

120 G (ABOUT 2 HANDFULS) FRESH KRILL

1 ONION, PEELED AND THINLY SLICED

1 TSP GROUND WHITE PEPPER

1 TSP SALT

½ TSP SUGAR

40 G (½ CUP) PLAIN OR ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR

40 G (½ CUP) RICE FLOUR

1 TSP BAKING POWDER

1 LARGE EGG

70 ML (½ CUP) WATER

300 ML (1½ CUPS OR ENOUGH TO ACHIEVE A DEPTH OF 4 CM IN THE PAN) VEGETABLE OIL

1. Pick over the krill and remove any impurities. Wash and drain thoroughly in a colander.
2. Put the drained krill in a large mixing bowl and add the onion, pepper, salt, sugar, flours and baking powder. Stir and toss until the krill is thoroughly coated. Stir in the egg and water and stop as soon as everything is thoroughly combined.
3. Heat the oil in a deep frying pan and when moderately hot, drop tablespoonfuls of the batter into the oil, allowing room for the fritters to puff up and cook without sticking to each other. Turn the fritters over to ensure even browning.
4. When golden and crisp, remove the fritters and drain on kitchen paper.
5. Serve immediately with your favourite tangy chilli sauce.

Krill are tiny shrimps, the kind that gets dried and made into belacan (fermented shrimp paste). They have an intensely savoury yet sweet flavour and are increasingly difficult to come by. If you can't get them, use a roughly equivalent amount of small peeled fresh prawns instead.

SIMPLIFIED YEW CHAR KWAY

FRIED DOUGH STICKS

Prep 15 mins | Rising 45 mins | Cook 10 mins Makes 12

How could something so simple inspire such devotion and be so ridiculously satisfying? I suppose only another Singaporean could understand. Just as the French cannot contemplate a day without their iconic croissant, each time I know I will be away from home for a while, I wish I could pack some yew char kway in with my toothbrush. Don't be intimidated by the thought of making these. There is a definite art to making them the traditional way, but this version really is very easy.

400 G (4 CUPS) PLAIN OR ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR
⅔ TSP INSTANT YEAST
1 TSP SUGAR
1½ TSP SALT
½ TSP BAKING SODA
250 ML (1¼ CUPS) WATER (SLIGHTLY WARM OR JUST A BIT OVER BODY TEMPERATURE)
400 ML (2 CUPS) OIL

1. Combine all ingredients except the oil (avoiding direct contact between the salt and the yeast) in a large mixing bowl. Knead until you have a smooth dough that doesn't stick to your hands.
2. Form the dough into a neat ball, oiling your hands lightly if necessary, to prevent sticking, and cover the bowl with a clean cloth or sheet of plastic. Leave to rise for 30–45 minutes or until it has doubled in volume.
3. Turn the dough out onto a clean, dry surface lightly dusted with flour. Pat down and roll out to a neat rectangle about 5 mm thick. Cover with cloth; and wait for about 5 minutes for dough to rest. Cut into 12 even strips about 15 cm by 3 cm.
4. Using the blunt side of a knife blade, press down the centre of each dough strip as if you're cutting it, but do not cut through the dough. There should be a deep impression but the dough strip should still be in one piece.
5. Heat the oil in a deep pan, until moderately hot. Gently lift the dough strip and lower into the hot oil. Repeat with the other dough strips, making the impression with the knife only immediately before frying each strip of dough so the impression remains and shows clearly after frying.
6. Turn the strips and push them into the oil so they cook right through and brown evenly. Don't fry too many at once as the temperature of the oil will drop, and this will cause the dough to absorb more oil and become greasy.
7. Remove from the pan when golden brown and drain on kitchen paper. Repeat with the remaining dough.
8. Serve immediately with black tea, Chinese tea, coffee or soy bean milk.

Yeast is organic and variable, so don't give up after one go if your first attempt is unsuccessful.

Ensure the water is lukewarm to be on the safe side as too high a temperature will kill the yeast. Better a little too cool than a little too warm.

Salt retards yeast and can even kill it so avoid directly combining the two together. It's best to mix your salt through the flour first, then add your yeast, or vice versa.

The rising time given is for warmer climates like the tropics, where yeast tends to take a shorter time to become active because of the ambient warmth and humidity. If you are making this in cooler climates, the rising time should be about an hour or possibly longer. Exact rising times are hard to predict, but the dough is sufficiently risen when it has at least doubled in volume, regardless of the time given in the recipe.

CURRY PUFFS

Prep 45 mins | Cook 25 mins | Makes about 10 puffs

Almost every culinary culture you could think of has its own version of this filled pastry parcel, whether it's an empanada, a turnover, or a pasty. Of course I prefer our version, with its spicy and fragrant filling encased in a crisp, blistered pastry shell. Few things satisfy more at tea time and the very first one you bite into, fresh and piping hot from the pan, will convince you that making them was time very well spent.

FILLING

4 TBSP LIGHT VEGETABLE OIL

1 LARGE ONION, PEELED AND FINELY DICED

**1½ TBSP MEDIUM HOT CURRY POWDER,
MIXED TO A PASTE WITH 3 TBSP WATER**

**1 LARGE YELLOW FLESHED POTATO, PEELED,
DICED AND SOAKED IN WATER TO
PREVENT DISCOLOURATION**

100 G MINCED CHICKEN, LAMB OR BEEF

1 TSP SALT

½ TSP SUGAR

100 ML (½ CUP) WATER

PASTRY

150 G (1½ CUPS) PLAIN OR ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR

½ TSP SALT

**50 G (½ CUP OR 4 GENEROUS TBSP) COLD
MARGARINE OR BUTTER, IN CUBES OR
SMALL PIECES**

50 ML (¼ CUP) COLD WATER

**300 ML (1½ CUPS OR ENOUGH TO ACHIEVE A
DEPTH OF 4 CM IN THE PAN) VEGETABLE OIL**

1. Prepare the filling first so it has time to cool. Heat the oil in a pan and when moderately hot, cook the onion until limp and fragrant.
2. Add the curry paste, potato and meat and stir, breaking up the meat and turning over everything to prevent burning.
3. When the meat changes colour, add the salt, sugar and water and stir, scraping the bottom of the pan to dislodge stuck-on bits.
4. Cover and cook over gentle heat until the potatoes are tender and the filling is thick and almost dry.
5. Turn off the heat and leave to cool while you make the pastry.
6. To make the pastry, whisk the flour and salt together in a large mixing bowl. Add the butter and rub into the flour with your finger tips, breaking up or squeezing into ever smaller pieces until the flour resembles coarse crumbs.

7. Pour in the water and lightly mix everything, pushing it all together to form a dough. **Avoid kneading the dough** to achieve a light and crisp texture.
8. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured clean surface, roll out to a thickness of 2–3 mm and cut out circles with a 7 cm round pastry or scone cutter. Divide the filling into as many portions as you have circles.
9. Put a portion on each circle, off-centre and lightly wet the edges of each pastry circle. Fold over each circle to enclose the filling and press down firmly on the edges to seal. Pinch and twist the edges at regular intervals to achieve a rope-like pattern.
10. Heat the oil for frying in a deep and small to medium pot. When moderately hot, fry the puffs a few at a time until golden, turning over a few times to ensure even cooking. Drain on crushed kitchen paper and serve while still hot.

If you have leftovers, store them wrapped in a brown paper bag, kitchen foil or baking paper in the refrigerator, for up to 2 days. Avoid storing in covered containers or sealed plastic as this will encourage condensation and result in a soggy crust. Before eating, unwrap and gently heat in a toaster oven for 8–10 minutes or until hot and crusty again. If they darken too quickly, cover lightly with foil while reheating.

GARLIC BREAD

Prep 10 mins | Cook 25 mins | Serves 2 as a snack or 4 as a side

I am always suspicious of recipes that claim to be the best ever anything, but I will say that this is my best garlic bread recipe ever. There's no exotic or magical ingredient here, though the Parmesan does add a really nice punch of flavour—just don't go overboard on the garlic, make sure it's very finely minced (if you're using fresh) and be patient when you're toasting it. Nothing spoils a potentially great loaf of garlic bread more than impatience and insufficient toasting.

75 G (½ CUP) SOFT BUTTER

3 LARGE CLOVES GARLIC, PEELED AND FINELY MINCED

½ TSP DRIED OREGANO

45 G (½ CUP) FINELY GRATED PARMESAN CHEESE

1 SMALL BAGUETTE, SPLIT HORIZONTALLY

A GENEROUS PINCH OF SALT

A GENEROUS PINCH OF PEPPER



1. Preheat oven at 190°C.
2. Combine the butter, garlic, oregano and grated cheese in a mixing bowl. Stir until very thoroughly mixed.
3. Toast the baguette halves (cut side up) in the oven for about 8 minutes or until lightly crisp and golden. Remove from the oven and allow to cool slightly.
4. Divide the butter mixture into two portions and spread each portion evenly over the cut side of each toasted baguette half, to the very edge of the baguette.
5. Put the baguettes into the oven and toast again until the tops are golden and a wonderful aroma emits from the oven.
6. Remove from the oven, slice with a sharp serrated knife and serve immediately on its own, or with soup or pasta.

Try using 1 tablespoon prepared garlic paste or 2 teaspoons garlic powder, instead of freshly minced garlic cloves if you're in a hurry, too lazy to peel and mince your own garlic, or just don't like the smell of garlic on your hands. I promise, I won't judge you ;)

LOBAH

SHREDDED YAM AND MEAT ROLLS

Prep 20 mins | Cook 15 mins | Serves 3–4

If you like poh piah or yam puffs, you will probably love these simple to prepare yet very moreish rolls of shredded yam, pork and prawns. I like to make a huge pot of Japanese or Chinese tea before I sit down and tuck into these as the tannins in the tea are said to bind and flush fat out of your body (fingers crossed). Or you know what? Just eat two, if you can.

400 G YAM (TARO), PEELED AND FINELY SHREDDED (YOU SHOULD HAVE 300 G AFTER PEELING)

200 G MINCED PORK

200 G PRAWNS (SMALL ONES ARE FINE), SHELLED AND COARSELY CHOPPED

1 ONION, PEELED AND COARSELY CHOPPED

1 SMALL EGG

60 G (ABOUT ⅓ CUP) PLAIN OR ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR

1 TSP SALT

1 TSP SUGAR

½ TSP GROUND WHITE PEPPER

½ TSP CHINESE FIVE SPICE POWDER (OPTIONAL BUT A NICE AND VERY FRAGRANT ADDITION)

300 ML (1½ CUPS OR ENOUGH TO ACHIEVE A DEPTH OF 4 CM IN THE PAN) VEGETABLE OIL

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine all the ingredients together and knead until you have a workable paste, which has the consistency of a soft, slightly sticky dough.
2. Lightly flour your hands and form the paste into sausage-like logs or rolls about 10 cm long and 2.5 cm wide. Put the rolls onto a plate lightly dusted with flour to prevent them from sticking.
3. Heat up the oil in a deep pan and when moderately hot, gently lower in the rolls.
4. Fry until golden brown, turning occasionally, so they cook evenly. This normally takes about 6–8 minutes over medium heat. Remove from oil and drain on kitchen paper.
5. Cool slightly, then cut each roll diagonally into 2 or 3 pieces. Serve as it is or with your favourite chilli and garlic sauce or dip. And don't forget that big pot of tea!

If you cannot find yam, substitute with regular potatoes. White fleshed potatoes like Russet Burbank are best as they crisp up better than yellow fleshed potatoes when fried.

Traditionally, thin matchstick-like strips of pork belly are used instead of minced pork, but it entails more work and requires a really sharp knife. If you're up to the challenge, use pork belly instead, but bear in mind you will have to fry the rolls longer as pork belly does not cook as quickly as minced pork.

You can also form the paste into small flattened patties instead of large rolls. This way, they will cook much faster and you needn't worry about uncooked centres.

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WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE HOMESICK FOR SOME SINGAPOREAN FOOD, BUT MUM'S NOT COOKING AND THERE'S NO HAWKER CENTRE YOU CAN SHUFFLE TO IN YOUR SHORTS AND FLIP-FLOPS?

▶ Cook some yourself! With the loving authority ▶
▶ of one who's used to creating friendly recipes ▶
▶ for those who are simply clueless or just lazy ▶
▶ about cooking, Denise Fletcher has produced ▶
▶ recipes for all the Singaporean food favourites ▶
▶ that you and your friends may crave. And if you ▶
▶ cannot get the ingredients where you are, her ▶
▶ substitutions will help you approximate that ▶
▶ taste of home. Thumb through this book and ▶
▶ search for a recipe to comfort you. ▶



Denise Fletcher, a Eurasian mother of three, has been a SHATEC-trained chef and the owner of a food business in Singapore. She also writes a food blog, *singaporeshiok.blogspot.com*.



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