



RISING UP

Sydney-based author, food editor and baking whiz Anneka Manning's new cooking school, BakeClub, celebrates the traditional art of baking and the timeless techniques that get passed through the generations.



Opposite: caramelised onion & blue cheese flatbread. This page (clockwise from top left): BakeClub classes are hands on; Anneka Manning; chocolate chunk fudge & hazelnut cookies (recipe p 72); orange blossom cheesecake with pomegranate syrup (recipe p 74).



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CREATING AN ETHEREAL SPONGE, complete with jam, cream and the CWA tick-of-approval is the stuff of baking dreams, but such techniques have become a forgotten craft in our busy lives (not to mention the proliferation of artisan bakeries and patisseries around the country making it so easy – and appealing – to cheat).

With this in mind, Sydney-based author and food editor Anneka Manning created BakeClub. “I discovered that so many people loved the idea of baking, but they didn’t do it at home because it was too hard and they didn’t have the time,” says Anneka. “I wanted to bring back traditional skills and show people that baking doesn’t have to be tricky.” And so, drawing on her 23 years of experience in Australian food print media and her passion for baking, Anneka launched BakeClub a year ago.

Each month Anneka hosts pop-up demonstrations and private classes in major cities and regional areas around the country. Classes are hands-on and focus on recipes that home cooks want to make. We joined Anneka for one of her 3-hour classes at a bright and airy studio in Sydney’s Rosebery where she guided us through baking 101, sharing her expert tips and tricks along the way. “BakeClub is about empowering people, so they enjoy baking,” she says.

“I wanted to teach people how to bake and show that it doesn’t have to be tricky.”

caramelised onion & blue cheese flatbread

Serves 10 as a starter

20g unsalted butter
3 red onions, halved, thinly sliced
2 tbs brown sugar
150g gorgonzola dolce* (see Shopping list), crumbled
1/3 cup (50g) pine nuts
Rocket leaves, to serve

Flatbread dough

3 cups (450g) bread & pizza flour* (see Shopping list), plus extra to dust
7g sachet dried instant yeast
1/4 cup (60ml) olive oil

For the dough, combine flour, yeast and 1 tsp salt in a large bowl and make a well in the centre. Combine oil and 1 cup (250ml) warm water, then add to the flour mixture. Stir to combine, then use your hands to form into a soft dough. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and knead for 5-8 minutes until smooth and elastic.

Place the dough in an oiled bowl, turning to coat lightly with the oil. Cover

with plastic wrap and rest in a warm place for 1 hour or until doubled in size.

Meanwhile, to make the caramelised onion, place the butter and onion in a saucepan over medium heat and cook, stirring occasionally, for 12-15 minutes until onion is soft. Sprinkle with the sugar and cook, stirring, for 6-8 minutes until the onion is glossy and caramelised, and any excess liquid has evaporated. Remove from heat and set aside to cool.

Preheat the oven to 230°C. Line a large baking tray with baking paper.

Knock back the dough. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and knead for 2-3 minutes until smooth and elastic. Roll out to a 1cm-thick 40cm x 25cm oval. Transfer to the lined baking tray. Top the dough with the caramelised onion, leaving a 1cm border, then sprinkle over the gorgonzola and pine nuts. Season with freshly ground black pepper and bake for 18-20 minutes until golden and cooked through.

Allow the flatbread to cool for 5 minutes, then scatter with rocket leaves. Slice into wedges and serve warm or at room temperature.

OWNER Anneka Manning.
STYLE Traditional baking techniques and heirloom recipes adapted to suit modern lifestyles.

WHERE Catch Anneka at a number of locations, including Thredbo, NSW; Jindabyne, NSW; and Sydney’s Rosebery (see Out & About, p 17, for our exclusive reader event with Anneka in Rosebery) as well as private group classes at various locations around the country.

UPCOMING CLASSES No Time to Bake, Thredbo, May 3; Monday Morning Cooking Club – Family Heirloom Baking, Sydney, June 2; Let’s Eat Cake, Sydney, June 15. All classes are \$150/person. Visit: bakeclub.com.au.

Shopping list

THE DELI & GOURMET SHOP

Freeze-dried raspberries, have a long shelf life and add a crunchy texture to cake toppings and biscuit doughs. Available from: essentialingredient.com.au; substitute fresh or frozen, thawed berries.

Gorgonzola dolce, mild creamy Italian blue cheese; substitute another soft blue cheese.

Orange blossom water, traditionally used in Middle Eastern desserts to add a delicate floral flavour.

THE SUPERMARKET

Bread & pizza flour, (also known as ‘strong’ flour) has a higher gluten-content than regular plain flour and is more suited to use in yeast-based recipes.

WORDS HEIDI FINNANE RECIPES ANNEKA MANNING PHOTOGRAPHY ALAN BENSON STYLING BERNI SMITHIES



layered white chocolate cake

Serves 15

400g white chocolate, chopped
300g unsalted butter, cut into 1cm pieces
300ml milk
1 1/2 cups (330g) caster sugar
2 tsp vanilla extract
3 eggs, at room temperature, lightly beaten
3 cups (450g) plain flour
3 tsp baking powder
1/2 cup (165g) good-quality raspberry jam
Freeze-dried raspberries* (see Shopping list) or fresh raspberries, to decorate

White chocolate ganache

750g white chocolate, chopped
1 cup (250ml) pure (thin) cream

Preheat the oven to 160°C. Grease and line two 20cm round cake pans.

Place chocolate, butter and milk in a saucepan over medium heat and cook, stirring, until melted and smooth. Transfer to a bowl and set aside to cool completely.

Add the sugar, vanilla and eggs to the chocolate mixture and whisk until well combined. Sift in the flour and baking powder, then stir until just combined. Divide mixture evenly between cake pans and tap pans gently on a flat surface to remove any air bubbles. Bake for 1 hour or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Cool the cakes in pans for 10 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack to cool completely.

Meanwhile, for the ganache, place the chocolate and cream in a heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of simmering water (don’t let the bowl touch the water), stirring until smooth and melted. Remove bowl from heat and cover with plastic

wrap. Chill, stirring occasionally, for 1 1/2 hours or until it reaches a thick spreadable consistency. Divide the ganache into three portions (you will use 1 portion for the filling and the remaining 2 to ice the cake) and use immediately.

To assemble the cake, trim the top of the cooled cakes to level, then slice each cake in half horizontally. Place one cake layer on a serving plate, and spread with one-third of the ganache filling, then top with 2 tbs jam. Repeat layering two more times, finishing with a final layer of cake. Using a palette knife, spread remaining ganache icing over the top and sides of the cake. Decorate the cake with freeze-dried raspberries, then serve.

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chicken, leek & thyme pies with simple flaky pastry

Makes 6

400g desiree potatoes, peeled, cut into 2cm pieces
60g unsalted butter
2 leeks (pale part only), halved lengthways, chopped
1 celery stalk, thinly sliced
4 prosciutto slices, chopped
1/3 cup (50g) plain flour
1/2 cup (125ml) milk
2 quantities Anneka's simple flaky pastry (recipe follows)
10 thyme sprigs, leaves removed
1 egg, lightly beaten with 2 tsp milk

Poached chicken

1.5kg whole chicken
2 carrots, thinly sliced
2 celery stalks, thinly sliced
1 onion, unpeeled, quartered
2 bay leaves
10 whole peppercorns

For the chicken, place all ingredients in a large saucepan or stockpot and add enough cold water to cover the chicken by about 2cm. Cover with a lid and bring to the boil over medium heat. Reduce heat to low and gently poach for 40 minutes or until the chicken is just cooked through. Remove the chicken from stock, transfer to a bowl and place in the fridge to cool.

Strain the stock, discarding the solids. (The stock can be reserved and kept frozen for up to 3 months). Return 1.5L (6 cups) stock to the saucepan and bring to the boil. Add the potato and boil for 8 minutes or until just tender. Remove the potato from the stock with a slotted spoon and set aside. Continue boiling the stock for a further 15 minutes or until reduced to 2 cups (500ml). Set aside.

Meanwhile, shred the chicken meat, discarding the skin and bones. Cover and chill until needed.

Melt 20g butter in a saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the leek, celery and prosciutto, then cook, stirring

occasionally, for 15 minutes or until the vegetables are just soft. Transfer to a bowl and set aside.

Melt the remaining 40g butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the flour and whisk for 1 minute. Remove pan from heat and gradually add the reduced stock and milk, stirring constantly, until smooth and combined. Return pan to medium heat and cook, stirring constantly, until thickened and simmering. Remove from heat and transfer to a large bowl. Stir in the shredded chicken, potato and leek mixture, then season well with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Chill for 1 hour or until cooled.

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Grease six 3/4 cup (185ml) ovenproof dishes or ramekins.

Roll out the pastry on a lightly floured work surface until 4mm thick. Using the top of one of the dishes as a guide, cut out 6 rounds of pastry. Divide the chicken mixture among the dishes and top each pie with some thyme leaves. Brush the edge of the dish with a little of the egg wash, then place a piece of pastry over each pie. Press down the edges with a fork to seal. Cut a small cross or two slits in the top of each pie, then brush pastry with a little egg wash to glaze.

Place the pies on a baking tray and bake for 25-30 minutes until the pastry is golden and crisp.

Serve pies straight from the oven.

anneka's simple flaky pastry

Makes 3-4 individual pie tops or one 25cm pie top

1 1/4 cups (185g) plain flour
125g unsalted butter, frozen

Combine the flour and a pinch of salt in a bowl. Holding the frozen butter with a piece of foil or baking paper (this will prevent it from melting), coarsely grate onto a chilled plate. Add grated butter to the flour, then using a round-bladed knife or palette knife, cut through the

flour and butter until mixed and evenly combined. Sprinkle 1/3 cup (80ml) chilled water over the flour and butter mixture. Using the knife again in a cutting motion, mix until evenly combined and the mixture starts holding together. Press a little of the mixture between your fingers, if it holds together easily, there is no need to add more water. If it doesn't, add an extra 1 tsp chilled water, then test again. Bring the pastry together with your hands and transfer to a lightly floured, cool work surface. Lightly knead the pastry with your fingertips for 30 seconds or until smooth and soft (the butter pieces will be visible in the pastry). Shape the pastry into a disc, then enclose in plastic wrap and chill for 30 minutes before using.

chocolate chunk fudge & hazelnut cookies

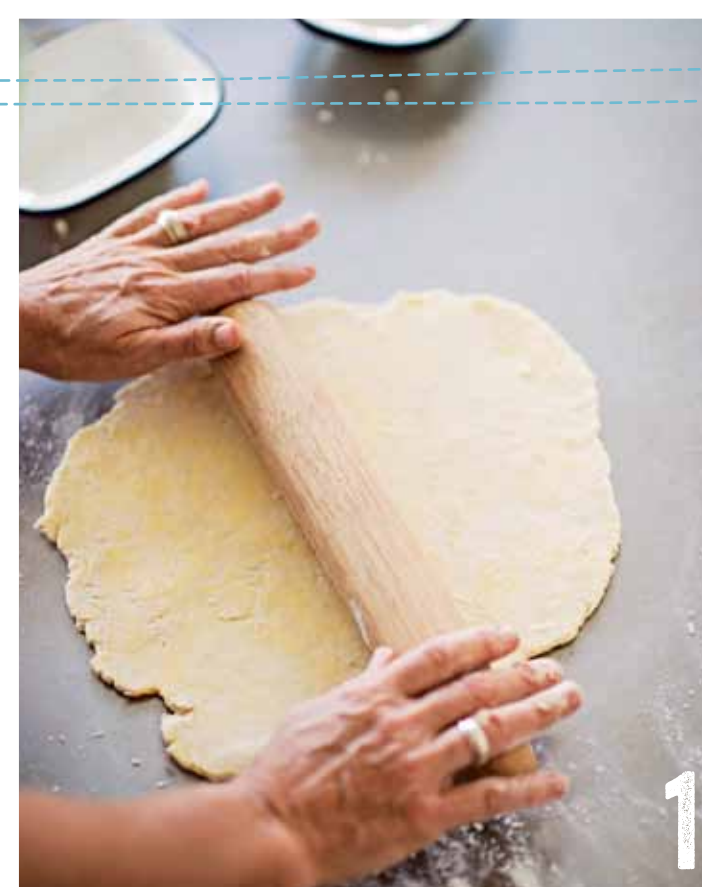
Makes about 35

These cookies will keep in an airtight container in a cool place for up to 2 weeks.

450g good-quality dark chocolate, roughly chopped
125g unsalted butter, softened
1/2 firmly packed cup (125g) brown sugar
2 eggs, at room temperature
1 1/2 cups (225g) plain flour
1/2 tsp baking powder
3/4 cup (100g) roughly chopped roasted hazelnuts

Place 300g dark chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of simmering water (don't let the bowl touch the water). Stir over low heat until the chocolate is melted and smooth. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool.

Beat the butter and sugar with electric beaters until thick and pale. Add the eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition until well combined. Add the cooled chocolate and beat until combined. Sift the flour and baking powder together, then fold into the mixture. Add the hazelnuts and remaining 150g dark chocolate, then stir until evenly combined. Cover the bowl with plastic



1. Roll out the pastry on a lightly floured work surface until 4mm thick. 2. Brush the edge of the dish with a little eggwash so the pastry adheres during cooking. 3. Brush the pastry with a little eggwash for a golden crust. 4. Serve the pies straight from the oven.

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wrap and chill for 1 hour or until the mixture is firm enough to roll into balls.

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line a large baking tray with baking paper.

Roll heaped tablespoonfuls of the cookie dough into balls and place on the baking tray, spaced 5cm apart. Place any remaining dough back in the fridge. Use your hands to flatten the balls slightly until 4cm in diameter, then bake for 10 minutes or until they are still slightly soft to the touch. Remove the cookies from the oven and cool completely on the tray. Repeat with the remaining dough.

orange blossom cheesecake with pomegranate syrup

Serves 10

100g plain sweet biscuits (we used morning coffee biscuits)
50g unsalted butter, melted
375g cream cheese, at room temperature, cut into 1cm pieces
3 eggs, at room temperature
¾ cup (185g) sour cream
½ cup (125ml) pure (thin) cream
¾ cup (165g) caster sugar
1 tbs finely grated orange zest
3 tsp orange blossom water*
(see Shopping list, p 70)

Orange & pomegranate syrup

Seeds of 1 pomegranate, juice reserved
¼ cup (55g) caster sugar
½ cup (125ml) orange juice, strained

Preheat the oven to 150°C. Grease a 20cm springform cake pan and line the base with baking paper.

Place the biscuits in a food processor and whiz until fine crumbs. Add the melted butter and whiz until combined. Sprinkle biscuit mixture over the base of the pan and press down to cover evenly. Place the pan on a baking tray and chill for 30 minutes.

Whiz cream cheese in the cleaned food processor until smooth. Add eggs and whiz to combine, then add the sour

cream, cream, sugar, orange zest and orange blossom water, and whiz until well combined, scraping down the side and base of the bowl if necessary.

Remove the pan from the fridge and pour mixture over the biscuit base. Gently tap the pan on the bench to remove any air bubbles, then bake for 1 hour and 10 minutes or until the cheesecake is just set but the centre still has a slight wobble when gently shaken. Turn off the oven and cool the cheesecake in the oven with the door ajar for at least 1 hour (this helps prevent the top of the cheesecake from cracking). Transfer the cheesecake to the fridge and chill for at least 3 hours.

For the pomegranate syrup, strain the juice from the seeds into a small saucepan and set the seeds aside. Add sugar and orange juice to the pan and stir over medium-low heat until sugar dissolves. Bring to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes or until the syrup has thickened and reduced to ⅓ cup (80ml). Remove from the heat and set aside to cool. Once cool, stir in the reserved pomegranate seeds.

Slice the cheesecake into wedges and top with pomegranate syrup to serve.

gluten-free mandarin, coconut & polenta cake with toffee mandarins

Serves 10

2 large mandarins
1 cup (100g) almond meal
½ cup (90g) instant polenta
½ cup (45g) desiccated coconut
½ tsp baking powder
3 eggs, at room temperature
¾ cup (165g) caster sugar
1½ tsp vanilla extract
Double thick cream, to serve

Toffee mandarins

4 mandarins, peeled, thinly sliced
1 cup (220g) caster sugar

Place the whole mandarins in a small saucepan and cover with water (if necessary, top with a small saucer

and a sheet of baking paper to keep the mandarins submerged). Bring to the boil, then cook for 45 minutes or until very soft when tested with a skewer. Drain and set aside to cool.

Preheat the oven to 160°C. Line the base and sides of a 20cm springform cake pan with baking paper.

Quarter the boiled mandarins, discarding the core and any seeds. Whiz in a small food processor until smooth. Set puree aside.

Combine the almond meal, polenta, coconut and baking powder in a bowl and stir to combine.

Beat the eggs, sugar and vanilla with electric beaters until very thick and pale and a ribbon trail forms when the beater is lifted (this will take about 3-4 minutes). Fold the mandarin puree into the egg mixture until just combined, then fold in polenta mixture until evenly combined. Pour the mixture into the prepared pan and smooth the surface with the back of a spoon. Bake for 40-45 minutes until the cake is firm to the touch and a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Cool the cake in the pan for 5 minutes before releasing the pan and transferring the cake, still on the base, to a wire rack to cool completely.

Meanwhile, for the toffee mandarins, line a large baking tray with baking paper and arrange the mandarin slices in a single layer on the tray. Place the sugar and ⅓ cup (80ml) water in a small saucepan and stir over medium heat, without boiling, until the sugar dissolves. Bring to the boil, without stirring, and cook, occasionally brushing the sides of the pan with a pastry brush dipped in water to remove any sugar crystals, for 7-10 minutes until golden. Remove from heat and drizzle half the toffee evenly over the mandarin slices. Set mandarins aside to cool. Add ¼ cup (60ml) water to the remaining toffee and stir to combine and form a syrup. Pour the hot toffee syrup over the cake and set aside to cool.

Serve the cake topped with the toffee mandarin slices and cream on the side. **d.**



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