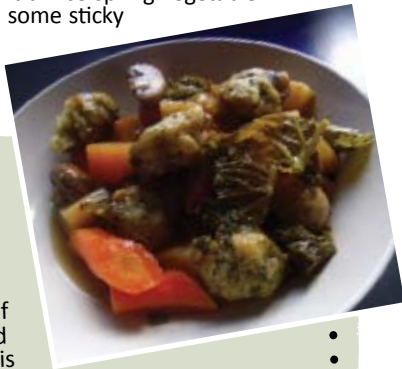




The Hope of Spring by Hazel Foster

It always feels good when you know that the worst of the winter months are behind you and signs of Spring start showing with the bulbs sticking their fresh green shoots out from the cold, hard earth and the hint of blossom on trees and shrubs. It's got to be the best season - so much to look forward to!

I probably should be starting to think about bikini weather and dig out some more low-fat recipes (yes, it will take that long!) But as it's still a bit chilly out there I thought a nice spring vegetable stew with herby dumplings with some sticky lemon buns for that time when you are stuck in because it's raining and you feel like doing a bit of baking. Enjoy!



• Spring Veggies • Casserole with Cheese • and Herb Dumplings - • Serves 4-5

• There is such a lovely choice of fresh vegetables out there and topped with the dumplings this makes a lovely meal for all. Of course for those who would like to add meat you could add it to the casserole at the beginning and adjust the timings accordingly, or serve it alongside. But I think sometimes it's nice to just taste all the lovely vegetables (and you don't feel so guilty about pudding if you've eaten lots of veg!).

• **For the dumplings**
• 100g self-raising flour • 50g butter at room temperature, cut into pieces • 50g hard cheese such as cheddar, comté or cantal, grated • 3 tbsp finely chopped parsley.

• **For the casserole**
• 3 tbsp olive oil • 8 shallots, peeled and cut in half lengthways • 250g small new potatoes, cut in half • 3 peeled garlic cloves, sliced • 200g carrots, chunky slices • 1 turnip, chunky cubes • 350g celeriac, chunky cubes • 600ml vegetable stock • 300ml fruity white wine, such as sauvignon blanc • ½ tsp of sugar • ½ tsp soy sauce • 100g kale or savoy cabbage • 200g chestnut mushrooms, halved • 2 tsp cornflour • 1 tbsp each of snipped chives and chopped parsley.

1. To make the dumplings rub the flour and butter together so it looks like breadcrumbs. Stir in the cheese, parsley and salt and pepper to season and set aside.
2. Heat the oil in a large pan over a medium heat, then throw in the halved shallots. Fry for 2-3 minutes till beginning to soften and turn brown and gold in places. Now add the potatoes and watch for the same effect, 3-5 minutes, stirring with a wooden spoon. Add the garlic, carrots, turnip and celeriac, allowing a couple of minutes between each so they get a chance to release their flavours. Pour in the stock along with most of the wine, then stir in the sugar and soy sauce and return to the boil. Simmer covered for 10 minutes.
(If preparing ahead make up to the end of step 2, cool and chill. About 20 minutes before you are ready to serve, bring back to the boil, and continue with step 3.)
3. Stir about 2 tbsp of water into the dumpling mixture to form a soft dough. Break off small pieces to make 25 dumplings, then shape into rounds about the size of a cherry tomato. Add the kale/cabbage and mushrooms. Stir the cornflour into the remaining wine until it has dissolved, then stir into the casserole to thicken. Bring to the boil, stir well then gently place the dumplings on top. Cover the pan with a lid and simmer gently for about 15 minutes till the dumplings have risen, and the stew is rich and thick and the vegetables deliciously tender. Check the seasoning.
4. Scatter herbs on top of the casserole.

• Sticky Lemon • Buns - Makes • 12 large rolls

• (these can be eaten any time of day - an alternate flavour from the cinnamon and sultana buns you may have had.)



• **For the dough:** 2 ½ teaspoons (1 sachet) active yeast • 180ml milk, warmed to about 100°F, warm but not hot on the inside of your wrist • 115g unsalted butter, room temp • 2 large eggs • 56g white sugar • 2 teaspoons vanilla extract • 1 lemon, zested • 560g all-purpose flour • ½ teaspoon salt • ¼ teaspoon nutmeg.

• **For the sticky lemon filling:** 200g granulated sugar • 1 lemon, zested • 56g unsalted butter, very soft • ¼ teaspoon powdered ginger • ¼ teaspoon freshly-ground nutmeg • 4 tbs lemon juice.

• **For the lemon glaze:** 1 lemon, zested and juiced • 125g icing sugar.

• **Make the dough:** In the bowl of a stand mixer, sprinkle the yeast over the warmed milk and let it sit for a few minutes or until foamy. Using the mixer paddle and with the mixer on low speed, stir the softened butter, eggs, sugar, vanilla, lemon zest, and 130g of the flour into the milk and yeast mixture. Stir in the salt and nutmeg. Stir in enough of the remaining flour to make a soft yet sticky dough. Switch to the dough hook and knead at low speed for about 5 minutes, or until the dough is smooth, pliable, and stretchy, or knead by hand to get the same result.

• Put dough in a greased bowl, cover the bowl with plastic wrap and a towel and let the dough rise in a warm place for 1 hour or until doubled.

• **Make the sticky lemon filling:** While the dough is rising, rub the lemon zest into the sugar with the tips of your fingers until well combined. Add the butter and beat together until it is thick and creamy. Add the ginger and nutmeg. Slowly add the lemon juice and mix. Refrigerate for at least ½ hour, or until you are ready to assemble the rolls.

• **Assemble the rolls:** Lightly grease a 13x9 inch baking dish with baking spray or butter. On a floured surface, pat the risen dough into a large yet still thick rectangle — about 10 x 15 inches. Spread the dough evenly with the sticky lemon filling. Roll the dough up tightly, starting from the top long end. Stretch and pull the dough taut as you roll, to keep the lemon filling inside. Cut the long dough roll into 12 even rolls and place each in the prepared baking dish. Cover the rolls with a towel and let them rise for 1 hour or until puffy and doubled.

• **→ Make-Ahead Instructions:** You can also refrigerate the rolls at this point. Cover the pan tightly with plastic wrap or a towel, and place it in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours. When you are ready to bake the rolls, remove the pan from the fridge, and let them rise for an hour before proceeding with baking.

• **Bake the rolls:** Heat the oven to 350°F/ 180°C. Place the risen rolls in the oven and bake for 35 minutes or until a thermometer inserted into a middle roll reads 190°F. While the rolls are baking, prepare the glaze. Add lemon juice a little at a time into the icing sugar until you have a thickish but spreadable glaze. When the rolls are done, smear them with the glaze, and sprinkle the lemon zest. Let cool for at least 10 minutes before serving. Can be eaten warm or cold.

Hazel Foster ~ Homechef 79
Personal Chef for dinner parties, special occasions
and catering services
Tel: 05 49 63 29 98 ~ Email: homechef79@gmail.com