



© Wikimedia/ PaoloPiscolla



© Wikimedia/ Drilinoth

Appetite for Autumn

by Hazel Foster

Wild Mushroom and Artichoke Tart

- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp butter
- 2 large onions, sliced
- 300g cooked artichoke hearts (fresh or tinned)
- 300g mixed mushrooms, halved if large
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 tsp fresh thyme leaves
- 500g shortcrust pastry
- 1 egg, a pinch of salt and 1 tbsp water, beaten together to glaze
- Handful flat leaf parsley leaves, roughly chopped

Heat oven to 200C/fan 180C. Heat 2 tbsps of olive oil in a medium frying pan, then gently fry the onions for 12-15 mins until softened and lightly browned. Tip the onions into a bowl and mix with the artichoke hearts and season. Heat the remaining oil and butter in the same pan and add the mushrooms, then stir-fry for 2-3 mins until soft, throw in the garlic and thyme and continue to cook for a minute. Remove from the heat, season and allow to cool.

On a floured surface, roll out the pastry into a rough circle about 40cm in diameter and drape over a large baking sheet. Pile the onions and artichokes into the middle of the pastry and spread them out evenly, leaving a 10cm border around the edge, then pile the mushrooms on top.

Bring the edges of the pastry up over the filling. Brush the exposed pastry edge with the egg glaze. Bake for 20-25 mins until the pastry is crisp and golden brown. Sprinkle with fresh parsley and serve.

October...I really love the seasons and after what felt like a very, long, hot summer (don't forget I am in the kitchen a lot, so it feels even hotter!), it's lovely now things have cooled down a bit and we can put that bikini away and start thinking about comfort food!

Keeping with what's in season, this month's recipes use wild mushrooms and pumpkins. Enjoy!

Wild Mushroom Pâté

- 100g/3½oz butter, plus extra melted butter to seal the pâté
- 600g/1lb 5½oz mixture of mushrooms
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 lemon, juice only
- pinch cayenne pepper
- 1 tsp grated nutmeg
- 150g/5½oz ricotta
- 100g/3½oz cream cheese

Heat the butter in a large saucepan and fry the mushrooms, onion and garlic for 10-12 minutes, or until soft. Add the lemon juice and place the mixture into a sieve to drain away excess moisture.

Blend half the mushroom mixture, the cayenne and nutmeg in a food processor or with a hand blender until smooth. Fold in the ricotta and cream cheese, along with the rest of the mushrooms.

Pack the mixture into ramekins or air-tight jars. Cover with a layer of melted butter. Set aside to cool completely.

Butternut Squash with Camembert

- 1 butternut squash, halved, seeds removed and put to one side
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and sliced
- Sprigs of fresh thyme
- 1tbsp olive oil
- 1 Camembert cheese, halved through the middle so you have 2 circles

Set the oven to 200°C. Put the squash into a roasting tin and season well. Sprinkle with the garlic, and a few thyme sprigs, and drizzle with oil. Roast for about 1 hr or until the flesh is just tender.

Place each Camembert half in the squash cavity, and top with more thyme.

Roast for 10 mins until the cheese has melted.

Pumpkin and Lentil Soup

- 1tbsp olive oil, plus 1 tsp
- 2 onions, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- Approx 800g chopped pumpkin flesh, plus the seeds
- 100g split red lentils
- ½ small pack thyme, leaves picked, plus extra to serve
- 1l hot vegetable stock
- pinch of salt and sugar
- 50g crème fraîche, plus extra to serve



Heat the oil in a large pan. Fry the onions until softened and starting to turn golden. Stir in the garlic, pumpkin flesh, lentils and thyme, then pour in the hot stock. Season, cover and simmer for 20-25 mins until the lentils and vegetables are tender.

Meanwhile, wash the pumpkin seeds. Remove any flesh still clinging to them, then dry them with kitchen paper. Heat the 1 tsp oil in a non-stick pan and fry the seeds until they start to jump and pop. Stir frequently, but cover the pan in between to keep them in it. When the seeds look nutty and toasted, add a sprinkling of salt and a pinch of sugar, and stir well.

Blend the cooked pumpkin mixture with a hand blender or in a food processor until smooth, then add the crème fraîche and blend again. Taste for seasoning.

Serve with a spoonful of crème fraîche, a few thyme leaves and the toasted seeds scattered on top.

Hazel Foster ~ Homechef 79

Personal Chef for dinner parties, special occasions and catering services

Tel: 05 49 63 29 98 ~ Email: homechef79@gmail.com