

Forgotten Zucchini Cake

There are many recipes on the internet for zucchini cake as these vegetables tend to get out of hand in the garden and sometimes a real bruiser emerges that is either destined for the compost heap or a relative who lives in an apartment. Presented last week with one the size of a small baseball bat, as well as a large bag of delicious blood plums by way of consolation, I took the challenge and found that I was able transform the forgotten zucchini into a rich, fluffy chocolate zucchini cake. I devised a recipe and halved and altered the standard sugar content without compromising the structure of the cake. The cake itself is easy to mix by hand in a bowl. The only bit requiring a bit of work is peeling and grating the zucchini. If you have a mechanized vegetable grater then that should make preparation a breeze. The fat content comes from extra virgin olive oil and some dark couverture chocolate buttons but you can omit the extra chocolate extravagance if you wish.

Elizabeth's Chocolate Zucchini Cake

Line base of a 23 cm springform tin. Preheat oven 160°C (fan forced).

- 350 g S.R. flour
- 50 g unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tsp mixed spice
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 175 ml extra virgin olive oil
- 160 g light brown sugar
- 40 g caster sugar
- 2 eggs
- 600 g grated zucchini
- 2/3 cup dark couverture buttons (optional)

Chocolate Ganache

- 100 g crème fraîche
- 100 g 70% cocoa chocolate or buttons

Prepare the zucchini. If using a large oversize one forgotten in the garden peel it and using the tip of a teaspoon remove the seeds. Grate the flesh with a course grater and measure the wet weight. Put the flour, salt, spice and cocoa in a bowl and mix well to combine. In another bowl stir the eggs, sugars and oil well with a whisk, making sure you break up the lumps of brown sugar. Add the zucchini to the wet ingredients and then fold through the dry ingredients and the chocolate buttons. Pour into the prepared tin and bake for approximately 40 minutes or until a skewer inserted in the centre comes out cleanly. Leave the baked cake in the tin to cool for 5-10 minutes. Remove the sides and cool for another 10 minutes before inverting onto a wire rack to remove the base and baking paper. The cake is very soft when warm, so minimise handling while it is still warm.

Prepare the ganache when the cake is completely cold. If using block chocolate chop it into small pieces and place pieces in a bowl. Heat the cream in a small saucepan and when it starts to boil remove from the heat and pour over the chocolate, stirring with a rubber spatula until the chocolate is smooth and completely melted. Leave to cool and thicken slightly and then pour and quickly spread over the cake. This cake stays light and moist for a few days. Enjoy.

Beef Tongue

Poaching meat and eating it cold is a great dinner solution for hot summer days and feeding groups of people. Matched with

a tasty sauce, home made aioli or herb mayonnaise and a salad, poached meat makes a very enjoyable meal.

Recently I poached some veal girello for [vitello tonnato](#) to eat at a beach house holiday. For this hot week I decided I would poach a beef tongue. Tongue – yuck, totally gross you say. But I suggest you give it a taste before you condemn this tender, fine-grained and economical meat. Tongue has a more delicate meaty flavour than you would expect of a cut consigned to the offal bin and the poaching liquid makes a lovely consommé. The versatility of a cooked tongue does not stop there; it also makes a great sandwich meat and slices can be gently reheated in the cooking broth for an instantly ready hot meal during the busy working week. For a tasty French version, reduce the stock, add raisins and cream or raisins and red wine vinegar for a sweet and sour sauce. The sauces and condiments you serve with a poached tongue can really add an extra festive dimension to the meal. Try it with a salsa verde (green sauce) made by blending parsley, cornichons, capers, mustard, anchovy, lemon and olive oil and a salsa rosso (red sauce), made with red peppers, onion and touch of chilli. A [remoulade](#) or mustard fruits also work well – there are many ways to lick it into shape.□

- 1 beef tongue, rinsed well under water
- 1 carrot
- 1 stick celery or a quarter fennel bulb
- 1 brown onion, halved
- 2 fresh bay leaves
- 6 whole peppercorns
- 4 juniper berries or pimento

Place tongue with roughly chopped vegetables, herbs and spices in a large stock pot and cover with cold water. Bring to boiling point and immediately reduce the heat to a very low simmer. Poach the tongue for approximately 2 hours. A skewer inserted into the thick end of the tongue should slip in easily when it is done. Remove the tongue to a board and leave

to cool slightly; just enough to be able to handle it. Meanwhile sieve the stock and discard the vegetables, herbs and spice. Return the stock to the heat and boil to reduce the volume by half.

Peel the tongue while it is still warm, it will be easier. Using a small sharp knife trim the tongue of any fatty bits on the thick end and underside and peel the thick skin off the whole tongue. Use the tip of the knife to get under the skin on the sides to aid the peeling process but you should be able to peel it off in large sections with your fingers relatively easily, particularly the skin on top of the tongue.

Refrigerate until ready to slice and serve. Place the cooled broth in the fridge for a few hours or overnight and then remove any fat that raises to the surface with a slotted spoon. Keep the broth for sauces, for reheating slices if you want to eat the tongue as a hot meal or freeze for future use as a stock.

Serve thin slices of cold tongue with a potato salad and a green salad and sauces or condiments of your choice.

Vitello Tonnato For Hot Summer Days

Vitello Tonnato is a lovely dish of thin slices of poached veal served cold with a tuna sauce. It is one of those classic Italian dishes that sadly I haven't encountered very much in Australia. However, [Gertrude Street Enoteca](#) routinely has it on their menu and it goes perfectly with a glass of white wine, a light red or a rosé. Vitello tonnato is a wonderful dish for hot summer days; it can be prepared in

advance and keeps well in the fridge for a few days, so is perfect for easy but stylish holiday meals. The trick to a good vitello tonnato is poaching the veal ever so gently, making sure it stays quite pink in the middle and therefore succulent. A meat thermometer is a great help if you are unsure of when the poaching is done (55-60°C for rare to medium rare). Girello is the cut to use. It is from a single hind leg muscle and usually weighs anything from 800 grams to around 1.7 kilograms. You can find it at continental or, more specifically, Italian butchers. The tuna sauce is a very tasty emulsion of tinned tuna, hard boiled eggs and olive oil with a little extra tang from some lemon and capers. Sliced thinly, smothered in tuna sauce, dressed with rocket, shaved Parmesan and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil, this cold, poached veal is an elegant summer dish. Give it a try.

Poached Veal

- 1 veal girello, approximately 1.7 kg or 2 smaller pieces
- olive oil
- 1 brown onion, sliced
- 1 celery stalk, sliced
- 1 carrot, sliced
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 cloves
- 4 juniper berries
- 2 anchovy fillets
- 500 ml white wine
- 250 ml white wine vinegar
- water to cover

Tuna Sauce

- 6 hard boiled eggs
- 2 x 250 g tins of tuna
- 1 tbs salted capers, rinsed and dried
- juice of a lemon
- 60 ml extra virgin olive oil

- approximately 180 ml poaching liquid, strained

Garnish

- extra virgin olive oil
- Parmesan cheese
- 1 tbs salted capers, rinsed and dried
- rockets leaves

To poach the veal, heat a pan with a little olive oil and brown the meat lightly on all sides. Remove the meat and set aside.

Add the vegetables, anchovies, herbs and spices to the pan and saute for a few minutes. Deglaze the pan with the wine and vinegar and place in a large pot with the veal. Add extra water to just cover the veal . Bring to the boil but turn down the heat as soon as it reaches the boil. You do not want to boil the meat and let it become tough and dry. Poach on a very low heat for 25 minutes, checking the core temperature with a meat thermometer (55-60°C for rare to medium rare). Remove the meat and refrigerate once completely cooled.

Simmer the stock to reduce by half and strain it over a fine mesh sieve. Keep 180 ml aside for the tuna sauce and freeze the remainder for use in a risotto or a stew.

For the sauce, blend the hard boiled eggs, drained tuna, capers, lemon juice and olive oil until smooth. With the food processor running add enough of the reduce stock to achieve a loose consistency. No added salt is usually needed but taste for extra seasoning if you wish. Refrigerate.

To Serve. Thinly slice the veal and put 4-5 slices on each plate. Spread the veal with 2 tablespoons of the sauce and refrigerate until ready to serve. Garnish with rocket leaves, shavings of Parmesan cheese, capers and a good drizzle of

extra virgin olive oil.

Mango Chia Pudding

Mango chia pudding is a great combination of luscious fruit and a super food, both grown locally in Northern Australia. Chia originated in Mexico and its status as a super food, while sometimes exaggerated, is certainly impressive. Chia has high levels of fibre (34%), calcium (5 x milk calcium), omega-3 fatty acids (18%) as well as being a good source of protein and minerals. A couple of tablespoons of chia in your diet, perhaps as a summer breakfast option, will provide you with about a third of your daily fiber requirements. If you are a vegetarian it is even more valuable as a source of protein, calcium and fat. If you like things like sago pudding topped with fruit then you will probably enjoy a chia pudding and with the added bonus that it is good for you, unlike sago, which has little nutritional value.

Mango Chia Pudding

serves 4-6

- pulped flesh of a mango and juice of an orange, approximately 1 cup
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup yoghurt
- 3/4 cup black chia seeds

Mix ingredients together and chill overnight, ready for breakfast the next day. The chia seeds will absorb 10 times their weight in liquid, swelling like sago, so a liquid mix is

good as it will all be absorbed overnight. Serve with slices of mango. Store refrigerated for a couple of days.

[Australia Chia, Atherton Tableland region of Northern Queensland](#)

[Australian Chia, The Kimberley, WA](#)

Australian Chia Co brand of black chia seeds are available at Woolworths \$13/500g

Buy bulk Australian chia from wholefoods shop [The Source](#) or buy online [direct from the producers](#)

Good review by [Choice : Chia seeds, Superfood or Fad](#)

Chocolate Plum Spice Cake

I decided to get a bit inventive by using mixed spice and plum compote when doing a scale-up test of the chocolate sponge for my black forest cake. As a result I created a chocolate plum spice cake that was very nice indeed. If you have a cake recipe that you love and consistently rely on, why not tinker with it and take it in another direction. We learn to play with savoury food, adding our own touches and omitting ingredients depending on circumstances, but most people rarely muck around with a cake. I think as long as you respect the proportions of eggs, flour and fat, there is certainly room for creative maneuver. I added [mixed spice from Gewürzhaus spice shop](#) to the cake batter. The cassia bark, ginger, nutmeg, allspice and clove mix gave the chocolate cake a lovely deep, Christmas pudding flavour that I contrasted with a home made plum compote. I would recommend using a plum compote similar to the middle European, *powidl*, a cooked down

plum paste without the addition of sugar to give some tartness. If you have a plum tree, think about using some of those plums for a compote this summer. Alternatively, you could use black or red currant jam or plum jam. This cake has a rather nice Christmas feel to it and could be popular for families not so fond of traditional Christmas pudding.

Line a rectangular 25 cm x 36 cm x2 cm baking pan with baking paper.

Preheat the oven to 150°C

- 5 eggs, separated
- pinch salt
- 66 g caster sugar
- 33 g icing sugar
- 21 g cocoa powder
- 105 g flour
- 2 tbs neutral vegetable oil
- 1 tsp mixed spice
- 250 g plum compote
- 150 ml pure cream, whipped*
- 60 g dark 70 % cocoa chocolate
- 60 ml cream, extra

Beat the egg whites with a pinch of salt until foaming. Gradually add the caster sugar and beat until stiff but with the tip of the peaks still drooping. Set the beaten white aside and now beat the egg yolks with the icing sugar until pale and thick. Sift the cocoa, flour and spice mix. Fold the beaten egg whites through the beaten egg yolk, followed by the mixed dry ingredients. Add the oil and fold through the mix. Spread the batter evenly in the pan and bake for approximately 10 minutes.

Cool the cake on a wire rack. Once cool peel off the baking paper and then cut the cake in half crosswise and trim edges neatly.

Sandwich the two slabs of cake with plum compote and whipped cream.

Prepare the chocolate ganache by heating the cream in a small saucepan until it comes to the boil. If not using chocolate callets, cut up the chocolate into small pieces and place in a bowl. Add the hot cream to the bowl of chocolate and mix well with a spatula until all the chocolate has melted and is smooth and shiny. When cooling and slightly thickened, pour the ganache over the top of the cake and quickly smooth it out to the edges evenly. Decorate with dried rose petals or edible flowers.

*Tip: add a tablespoon or two of natural yoghurt to the cream and whip to lighten the load.



