



# Cooking with Claire @TVInfants

*Tasty treats to make with the family, eat at home or use as gifts.*

## Christmas Cake Tray Bake:

### Ingredients:

125g (4 1/2 oz) butter, softened  
 125g (4 1/2oz) golden caster sugar  
 3 small eggs  
 150g (5 oz) plain flour  
 500g (11b 2oz) mixed dried fruits  
 1 tsp mixed spice

### to decorate

1 tbsp warmed, sieved apricot jam  
 300g (10oz) marzipan  
 200g (7oz) royal icing sugar  
 silver sugar balls or cake decorations you will need  
 a 7x11 inch rectangular tray bake tin, lined with baking parchment

### Method:

Pre-heat the oven to 170C, 150C fan, gas 5.

Place the butter and sugar in a mixing bowl and beat until really light and creamy, gradually beat in the eggs. Fold in the flour, fruit and spice to give a soft dropping consistency.

Bake for 45-50 mins until just firm to the touch. Allow to cool completely.

Brush with apricot jam then roll out the marzipan on a lightly dusted work surface. Spread the top of the cake thinly with jam then press the marzipan on top.

Make up the royal icing sugar as directed on the pack, then place in a small piping bag, snip the end and drizzle over the cake. Decorate with sprinkles then cut into slices.

This will keep for 2-3 weeks in a cake tin.



If liked, drizzle the united cake with a little brandy or rum to give extra flavour.

## Chocolate Yule Log

### Ingredients:

4 large eggs  
 100g (4oz) caster sugar  
 65g (2 1/2 oz) self-raising flour  
 40g (1 1/2 oz) cocoa powder

### For the filling:

**Cherry Jam (for your favourite if it's not cherry).**

300ml (10floz) whipping or double cream, whipped.

### For the icing/optional:

Whipped Chocolate Ganache

475ml whipping cream  
 570g plain cooking chocolate  
 Sprinkle of icing sugar.



### For the cake:

Preheat the Oven to 220 C - Fan 200 C -Gas 7. Grease a 33 x 23 cm (13x9 in) Swiss roll tin and line with baking parchment.

Whisk the eggs and the sugar in a large bowl until the mixture is light and frothy and the whisk leaves a trail when lifted out. Sift the flour and the cocoa into the mixture, carefully folding them in at the same time. Turn the mixture into the prepared tin and give it a gentle shake so that the mixture finds its own level, making sure that it spreads evenly into the corners.

Bake in the pre-heated oven for about 10 minutes or until the sponge begins to shrink from the edges of the tin. While the cake is cooking, place a piece of baking parchment a little bigger than the size of the tin on to a work surface and sprinkle it with caster sugar.

Invert the cake on to the sugared parchment. Quickly loosen the parchment on the bottom of the cake and peel it off. Trim the edges of the sponge with a sharp knife and make a score mark 2.5 cm (1 inch) from one shorter edge being careful not to cut right through. Roll up the cake firmly from the cut end, with the parchment inside and leave to cool.

### For the filling:

Warm the jam slightly in a small pan until it is of the consistency that is easy to spread. If it is too warm it will soak straight into the sponge. Carefully unroll the cooled cake. Remove the baking parchment, spread the jam and whipped cream and re-roll.

### For the chocolate ganache icing:

Chop the chocolate into small pieces and place it in a large stainless steel bowl.

In a large, high-sided saucepan heat cream over medium high heat, stirring frequently, until it starts to boil. At this point, the cream will want to boil over, so keep an eye on it! Immediately remove from heat and pour over chopped chocolate.

Stir until chocolate is completely melted and mixture is smooth. Cool completely and then store in refrigerator until cooled a little. Whip the ganache until it goes a little paler.

Cut a short end of the Swiss roll at a 45 degree angle. Place on the side of the remaining log (see picture). Ice both parts and then use a fork to create a wooden bark effect. Decorate in a "festive fashion" as you prefer.

### Bakewell Tart style Christmas Tart:

#### Ingredients

For the pastry

300g/10½oz plain flour, plus extra for dusting

125g/4½oz unsalted butter

30g/1oz icing sugar

1 free-range egg, plus 1 extra, beaten, to glaze

2 tsp milk, to bind (if needed)

*Alternatively buy a block of short crust pastry from the shop! (£1.30 from tesco ready rolled)*

#### For the filling

225g/8oz butter, softened (**don't substitute with margarine**).

225g/8oz sugar

225g/8oz ground almonds

3 free-range eggs

1 orange, finely grated zest only

50g/2oz plain flour

Jar of mincemeat.



Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6.

#### Preparation method

- **For the pastry**, place the flour, butter, sugar and egg into a food processor and pulse to combine. If necessary, add a little milk to help bring the mixture together.
- Turn the dough out onto a floured work surface and roll out until large enough to line a 26cm/10in tart tin. Carefully lift into the tin, and then place into the fridge to chill for an hour.
- Fill the tart case with a sheet of greaseproof paper weighed down with baking beans or rice. Bake the tart case blind in the oven for 15-20 minutes.
- Remove the paper and beans and brush the pastry all over with beaten egg. Return to the oven for a further five minutes, until golden-brown. Remove from the oven and turn the oven temperature down to 180C/350F/Gas 4.
- **For the filling**, beat the butter and sugar together in a bowl until pale and fluffy.
- Mix in the ground almonds, then crack in the eggs one at a time, beating well between each addition - don't worry if the mixture begins to split, just add a little of the flour.
- Fold in the orange zest and the flour.
- Spread some of the jam generously across the base of the pastry, leaving a 2.5cm/1in gap around the edge.
- Spread the filling mixture over the mincemeat and sprinkle over the flaked almonds.
- Transfer to the oven and bake for 20 minutes, or until set and golden-brown. Allow to cool in the tin before serving in slices.

### Mince Pies.

#### Sweet Short crust pastry:

500 g plain flour , plus extra for dusting

100 g icing sugar , sifted

250 g butter , cut into small cubes

1 lemon , zest of (optional)

2 large free-range eggs , beaten

1 splash milk

**Options for the pastry:** you can add flavours to your pastry:  
orange or lemon zest finely grated.  
some cinnamon (1 tsp)

**1 Jar of mincemeat – luxury or value – it doesn't matter.**



Pre heat the oven to 200 C- 180 C Fan Gas 6. Grease your pie tins well.

#### To make the pastry:

Sieve the flour into a bowl and sieve the icing sugar over the top. Using your hands, work the cubes of butter into the flour and sugar by rubbing your thumbs against your fingers until you end up with a fine, crumbly mixture. This is the point where you can spike the mixture with interesting flavours, so mix in your lemon zest.

Add the eggs and milk to the mixture and gently work it together till you have a **ball of dough**. **Flour it lightly**. **Don't work the pastry too** much at this stage or it will become elastic and chewy, not crumbly and short. Flour your work surface and place the dough on top. Pat it into a flat round, flour it lightly, wrap it in Clingfilm and put it into the fridge to rest for at least half an hour.

Cut out large round circle (base of the mince pies) and place them gently in the bottom of each pie tin.

Fill each pie with mincemeat being careful not to over fill.

Cut out smaller circle (the tops) or you can use stars or other festive decorations (see photo).

Brush lightly with milk or egg wash and place in the oven for 10 mins checking after 8 or so to make sure the edges are not burning.

Leave to cool, they can be served warm or cold, if you want to re-heat place in a warm (100 C oven for 5 mins or so) until warmed through.

**(Do not microwave, it ruins the pastry and can result in severe burns).**

## Florentines

### Ingredients

140g light muscovado sugar  
100g clear honey  
200g salted butter  
100g desiccated coconut  
140g flaked almonds  
300g glacé cherries, sliced  
4 tbsp plain flour  
250g dark, milk or white chocolate, or a mix  
Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6.



### Method

Put the sugar, honey and butter in a large pan and gently melt together. When all the sugar has dissolved stir in the coconut, flaked almonds, sliced cherries and flour.

Line a large baking tray with greaseproof paper (about 40 x 30cm), and roughly spread the Florentine mixture out to a thin layer – **don't worry if you have small gaps**, it should melt together in the oven.

Bake for 10-12 mins until a rich golden colour, and then set aside to cool and firm up.

Melt the chocolate(s) all in separate heatproof bowls over gently simmering water.

Line a second large tray or board with greaseproof paper and carefully flip the cooled Florentine bake onto it. Peel off the greaseproof paper. Spread the melted chocolate over; **if you're using a few types just leave a gap between each.**

Leave aside until set, then stamp out shapes using cookie star cutters - if the cutter is digging into your hands (as the Florentine mix may be a little hard), rest a small plate or pan on top of it and push down on this instead.

**If you don't mind what shape they are and want a more traditional "round", then spoon (table spoon) "blobs" of mix onto the baking sheet leaving plenty of room to spread.** You will have to cook batches at a time. Follow the same baking instruction only check after 7 or 8 mins.

Once they are cool, melt the chocolate (see above) and either follow the same instructions or spread/drizzle over in the pattern of your choice. See Pictures to the left.

## Claire's Brownies: (The big secret revealed)!!!!

These are not for the faint hearted – they **come with a health warning...butter sugar and chocolate and no apologies!**

### Ingredients:

185g (6oz) butter (**salted it's better**)  
185g (6oz) dark chocolate (own brand, but never value)  
3 eggs  
1 ¼ cups of caster sugar  
2/3 cup of plain flour  
1/2 cup of cocoa powder  
3/4 cup of chopped milk chocolate (well I use a whole 150-200g bar)  
3/4 cup of chopped white chocolate (guess what I use)!



### Making the Brownies:

Preheat the oven (please do this) to 180 C (350 F).

Place the butter and the dark chocolate in a pan, heat gently and stir until mixture is combined and melted. Turn off the heat and leave to cool a little bit.

In a large bowl (I mean large this gets messy.) Beat with an electric whisk – (you need air and gloss) the eggs and sugar until is all ballooned up and pale, creamy thick and glossy.

Fold through very slowly the chocolate and butter mix stirring continually **so it doesn't cook the eggs. Once mixed sieve in the flour and mix.**

Add the chopped chocolate and stir a little more until is distributed evenly.

**Pour into a "tray bake" style tray and bake for up to 30-40 minutes**, please check as the edges can singe very quickly.

While you are waiting for the brownies to bake – lick the bowl – this bit is not optional, unless you are pregnant due to the raw egg!

**The middle should still be "wet" but solid**; the top will be all cracked and flaky. Once the brownie is baked, remove and allow to cool. Do not attempt to cut it when it is warm – it will just ooze everywhere.

To get a really fudgy texture – pop in the fridge overnight – cut into small squares (you will be sick if you cut them into big squares honestly) and **then allow to get up to room temperate. You don't have to do this bit, but that's how I like them. Served warm straight from the oven, if you must – add ice-cream!**

**Good luck and don't blame me when you get on the scales.**

## Ideas for presenting gifts:

*Gifts don't have to be expensive, the time, effort, love and care that you put into your gift means more than the actual value. Whether it's Christmas, Birthday, Eid, Diwali, Get Well Soon, Happy Thursday or "I was baking and I thought of you"!*

£1 shops and 99p shops are the best place to find the cheapest boxes and packets, ribbons and other decorations to make your own gift packages.

Look out in charity shops for containers, jars, boxes etc you could use.

Keep old jars, wash them and use them to hold sweets or perhaps (very trendy right now) the dry ingredients to your favourite "all in one bowl" cake.

My favourite gift is a tin – **empty with a note inside or vouchers...not for Argos or Asda but for your baking!** I gave my friend 12 little vouchers, all she does is return the tin to me, whenever she wants with her chosen voucher.

*Give a little baking happiness and see what happens.*

## What about Stir up Sunday – **what's that all about?**

Traditionally, families gather together in the kitchen of their homes to mix and steam Christmas pudding on Stir-up Sunday.



Parents teach their children how to mix ingredients for the pudding. Everyone takes a turn to stir the pudding mix for each person involved is able to make a special wish for the year ahead. Practically, stirring the mixture is hard work, therefore as many as possible are involved. By tradition the pudding mixture is stirred from East to West in honour of the three wise men who visited the baby Jesus.

In some households, silver coins are added to the pudding mix.

It is believed that finding a coin brings good luck.

Here's some really good websites I found with more details AND a recipes.

<http://resources.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/xmas/stirup.htm>

<http://www.waitrose.com/home/christmaswithwaitrose/stir-up-sunday.html>