

Rhubarb, strawberry, balsamic and thyme pie

My mum used to make a killer retro salad: strawberries, baby spinach and balsamic vinegar. I loved it. The sweetness of the summer strawberries blended with the balsamic vinegar to make a tart salad dressing. It was really kitsch but I thought it was great when it got rolled out for summer barbecues. The same combination works just as well in this pie, especially with the addition of strawberries' best friend, rhubarb. – *Kirsten*

Serves 8

2 × 435 g (15½ oz) frozen Careme vanilla bean pastry, thawed, or other bought sweet shortcrust rolled to a thickness of 3 mm (⅛ in)

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) rhubarb, trimmed and cut into 5 cm (2 in) pieces

1 vanilla bean, split lengthways and seeds scraped

220 g (8 oz) caster (superfine) sugar

3 thyme sprigs

2 teaspoons cornflour (cornstarch)

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) strawberries, hulled and halved

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

1 egg, lightly beaten

1 tablespoon demerara sugar, for sprinkling

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F). Line a 20 cm (8 in) pie dish with one of the pastry sheets, leaving a 1 cm (½ in) overhang. Line the pastry case with baking paper, fill with baking beads (or uncooked rice or dried beans) and bake for 15 minutes or until the pastry is just dry and light golden. Remove the paper and baking beads and leave to cool. Cut the remaining pastry sheet into eight 4 cm (1½ in) strips. Chill the strips while you make the filling.


Cook the rhubarb, vanilla, caster sugar and thyme sprigs with 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) of water in a large deep frying pan over medium heat. Carefully stir until the sugar starts to dissolve, then reduce the heat to medium-low, cover and simmer for 8 minutes or until the rhubarb is almost tender. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the rhubarb to a colander set over a bowl and discard the thyme sprigs. Leave to drain very well.

Combine the rhubarb syrup with the cornflour and return to the pan set over medium heat. Boil for 10 minutes or until thick and syrupy then leave to cool for 10 minutes.

Carefully fold the rhubarb through the syrup followed by the strawberries and balsamic vinegar. Spread the cooled filling into the pastry case.

Make a lattice top with the cooled strips (see page 150) and place it over the filling. Trim any excess, pinching the edges to seal. Brush with the beaten egg and sprinkle with the demerara sugar. Place on a baking tray and bake for 55 minutes or until golden. Rest for 30 minutes before serving.





Sweet potato and maple pie

Pumpkin pie is delicious, I don't deny it, but personally I'm a sweet potato fan. The addition of the white chocolate to this recipe gives the pie an amazing fudgy texture, and the maple syrup and brown sugar taste like a beautiful light caramel. Push your boundaries and don't be afraid to put vegetables in your desserts! – *Phoebe*

Serves 8

800 g (1 lb 12 oz) sweet potato, peeled and chopped into 2 cm (3/4 in) pieces

50 g (1 3/4 oz) cold unsalted butter, chopped

1 vanilla bean, split lengthways and seeds scraped

100 g (3 1/2 oz) white chocolate, finely chopped

2 eggs

125 ml (4 fl oz/1/2 cup) maple syrup, plus extra to serve

60 g (2 oz) soft brown sugar

125 g (4 1/2 oz/1/2 cup) sour cream

1/2 teaspoon ground ginger

Base

350 g (12 1/2 oz) ginger nut biscuits (ginger snaps)

80 g (2 3/4 oz) unsalted butter, melted then cooled

For the base, whiz the biscuits in a food processor to fine crumbs. Pulse in the butter, then press the mixture into the base and side of a 20 cm x 3 cm (8 in x 1 1/4 in) loose-based cake tin. Chill until needed.

Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F) and line a baking tray with baking paper. Toss together the sweet potato, butter and vanilla pod and seeds on the tray, making sure they are in a single layer, and roast for 1 hour or until very tender and lightly caramelised. Reduce the oven temperature to 160°C (320°F).

Transfer the cooked potato (discarding the vanilla pod) to a food processor and process until smooth. With the motor running, add the white chocolate until melted and combined, then, with the motor still running, add the eggs, maple syrup, brown sugar, sour cream and ground ginger to form a smooth purée.

Spread the sweet potato mixture over the chilled base and bake for 45 minutes or until set. Cool to room temperature, then chill for 2 hours or until firm. Remove from the tin and cut into thick slices to serve.

Note: Instead of sweet potato, I've swapped in roasted carrots and it's just as moreish.

Almond, vanilla and raspberry handpies

I love how super-simple these pies are – hardly any ingredients for a great result. The best thing about handpies is that you really have an excuse not to share. There are some really good-quality store-bought puff pastries out there nowadays; just make sure you buy butter puff and not a margarine- or oil-based pastry. – *Phoebe*

Makes 4

250 g (9 oz) fresh raspberries

100 g (3½ oz) demerara sugar

1 vanilla bean, split lengthways and seeds scraped

2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest

2 teaspoons lemon juice

2 sheets frozen butter puff pastry (total 330 g / 11½ oz), thawed, and if needed, rolled to a thickness of 2 mm (⅛ in)

50 g (1¾ oz) almond meal

1 egg, lightly beaten

4 tablespoons flaked almonds

Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F). Mix together the raspberries, sugar, vanilla seeds and lemon zest and juice in a bowl with a fork, lightly crushing some of the raspberries.

Cut each sheet of pastry into four equal squares and place four pieces on a baking tray lined with baking paper.

Stir the almond meal through the raspberry mixture and divide between the squares on the baking tray, leaving a 1 cm (½ in) border all round. Top with the remaining pastry squares, pressing the edges to seal. Brush with the beaten egg and scatter with the flaked almonds. Cook for 25–30 minutes until golden.



S'more handpies

Growing up, I always loved the descriptions of s'mores in American novels. While we were occasionally allowed marshmallows with our mug of unsweetened cocoa, s'mores would definitely have been off limits! This is my take on those classic American campfire flavours. I took these to my partner Simon's house after the shoot and while we didn't sit around a fire singing camp songs, standing in the kitchen at midnight devouring them with a glass of red was, I think, just as satisfying. – *Phoebe*

Makes 6

250 g (9 oz) shortbread biscuits (cookies)

½ teaspoon ground ginger

70 g (2½ oz) unsalted butter, melted then cooled

200 g (7 oz) dark chocolate, chopped

200 ml (7 fl oz) pouring (single/light) cream

2 egg whites

150 g (5½ oz) caster (superfine) sugar

50 g (1¾ oz) white marshmallows, chopped

Pulse the biscuits and ginger in a food processor to fine crumbs. Add the butter and pulse again to combine.

Press the crumb mixture into the bases and sides of a six-hole 80 ml (2½ fl oz/⅓ cup) capacity muffin tin, then chill.

Put the chocolate in a heatproof bowl. Heat the cream in a microwave-safe jug in the microwave on high, or in a small saucepan over medium heat, until it reaches just below boiling point. Pour over the chocolate and stir until it forms a smooth, melted ganache. Divide among the muffin holes and chill for 2 hours or until set.

For the marshmallow topping, whisk the egg whites and sugar together in a heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of gently simmering water (make sure the bottom of the bowl doesn't touch the hot water). Whisk for 10 minutes until thick ribbons can be formed and the sugar has dissolved. Whisk in the marshmallows until dissolved, then transfer to the bowl of an electric mixer and whisk until cooled completely. Dollop on top of the chocolate ganache and, using a kitchen blowtorch, gently caramelize the marshmallow. If you don't have a blowtorch place them under a very hot grill (broiler) for 1–2 minutes. Serve immediately.

Note: To make it easier to release the pies from the tins, you could cut twelve 1 cm (½ in) thick strips of baking paper and place them in a cross on the base of the muffin tins before you press in the crumb. Use the cross to help lift the cooked pies out of the tins.

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Tamarind and lime pie with salted cashew praline

We love pairing sour with salt. This recipe is like all the goodness of a margarita, in a pie. It might sound like a bit of a funky combo but it really works. It's all about the sour from the tamarind and lime, with the sweet and salty praline. Don't worry about the sharpness in this pie: it is completely balanced by the sugar, and it's just like having a cracking good lemon pie. – Kirsten

Serves 12

435 g (15½ oz) frozen Careme vanilla bean pastry, thawed, or other bought sweet shortcrust rolled to a thickness of 3 mm (⅛ in)

juice of 2 limes

80 ml (2½ fl oz/⅓ cup) tamarind concentrate

6 eggs

220 g (8 oz) caster (superfine) sugar

250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) thick (double/heavy) cream

Salted cashew praline

oil spray, for greasing

150 g (5½ oz) caster (superfine) sugar

3 tablespoons roughly chopped roasted cashews

1 teaspoon sea salt flakes

Line a 26 cm × 26 cm × 3 cm deep (10¼ in × 10¼ in × 1¼ in) pie dish with the pastry and press into the sides. Chill in the freezer for 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F). Trim away any excess pastry, then line the case with baking paper and fill with baking beads (or uncooked rice or dried beans). Place on a baking tray and cook for 15 minutes. Remove the paper and baking beads then cook for a further 10 minutes or until the pastry looks golden and feels dry to the touch. Set aside to cool. Reduce the oven temperature to 160°C (320°F).

Whisk the lime juice, tamarind, eggs, sugar and cream in a bowl until combined, then leave to stand for 5 minutes. Pour the tamarind filling into the pastry case and bake for about 25 minutes or until the filling has just set. Cool to room temperature then refrigerate until cold.

To make the salted cashew praline, line a baking tray with foil and grease it lightly with oil spray. Place the sugar in a clean saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook, without stirring, for 3 minutes or until the sugar starts to caramelize. Swirl the pan occasionally for a further 3 minutes or until the caramel is dark golden. Add the cashews and swirl to coat them in the caramel, then pour over the tray in a single layer. Scatter with the salt flakes and set aside for 30 minutes until hard. Break the praline into large shards and serve with the pie.

