

LUNCH MENU FOR JANUARY 2010

Creamy Butternut Squash Soup with Toasted Sunflower Seeds & Croutons, Cheese Scones, Scotch Eggs, The "Best Ever" Mini Chocolate Puddings

Creamy Butternut Squash Soup – Serves 9 children or 6 adults

Note: Children should not cut the squash – An adult must ALWAYS do this. If you can get children to like soup it is a fantastic way to get vegetables into them, and it's filling too!

25g/1oz sunflower seeds
25g/1oz butter
1 lge butternut squash, halved, seeds scooped out
1 onion, chopped
1 lge potato, peeled & diced
1 litre vegetable stock
nutmeg
142ml pot single cream

Preheat oven to 190C/Gas 5. Scatter sunflower seeds on a baking tray and toast for about 6 mins until lightly toasted.
Place the prepared squash on a baking tray and dot with a little of the butter and a grinding of black pepper and bake for around 45 mins, or until tender.
When the squash is tender, scoop out the flesh and put to one side.
Melt the rest of the butter in a pan and fry the chopped onion until soft. Add potato, squash and stock. Cover and bring to a boil and then simmer for 15 mins.
Puree and add the cream and a good grating of nutmeg and heat until hot, but not boiling. Serve sprinkled with sunflower seeds and croutons.

Cheddar Cheese Scones – Makes around 12 scones (a good alternative to bread, and you can freeze what you don't eat) I made these in a food processor and it took 2 mins!

225g/8oz S.R. Flour
55g/2oz butter, diced
25g/1oz Mature Cheddar, grated
150ml/5fl oz milk

Oven 220C/Gas 7. Lightly grease a baking sheet. Put flour into a bowl and rub in the butter with your fingertips. Stir in the grated cheese and then add the milk to get a soft dough,. Or, put flour into food processor, add butter and whiz until like breadcrumbs, add cheese, pulse, then add milk and whiz until it turns into a dough. Turn on to a floured surface and knead very lightly. Roll out to depth of 2cm or ¾ ". Cut out using a 2" fluted cutter. Place on the baking sheet. Brush the tops with a little milk and bake for 12-15 mins until well risen and golden. Cool on a wire rack.

Croutons

½ a piece of white bread per person. Cut off the crusts and cut into cubes. Fry in hot oil in a frying pan for a couple of minutes until golden – Drain on kitchen paper – These will keep well in an airtight container if you make too many – They are good in salads too.

Scotch Eggs

Note: These are fun to make and delicious for a Saturday lunch, served with salad.
Boil your eggs for 8 mins (if you make them too runny inside they are difficult to wrap in the sausage meat and burst!). Cool eggs in water, then carefully peel. Work the sausage meat in your fingers until pliable (you can add some chopped parsley/cinnamon/nutmeg if you like). Tear off a piece of sausage meat/vegetarian sausage slightly bigger than the egg, mould it in your hands, roll the egg in some flour, shake off excess, and then carefully wrap the sausage around the egg, pinching the joins together well. Roll in egg and then breadcrumbs and then either deep fat fry if you have one for about 7 mins, or put in hot oil in a baking tray in the oven for a good 10 mins, turning whilst cooking until browned, and the sausage meat cooked. Drain on kitchen paper and serve immediately. Don't worry if they split, they still taste delicious.

The "Best Ever" Mini Chocolate Pudding – Serves 5

Tip: don't be tempted to over-cook these puddings or the chocolate sauce will go firm. A good 'make ahead' pudding.

150g/5 ½ oz unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing
150g/5 ½ oz milk chocolate, broken into pieces (or you can use dark chocolate for a 'grown ups' pudding)
85g/3oz caster sugar
2 eggs and 2 egg yolks
2tbsp plain flour
1 tbsp cocoa powder
Icing sugar for dusting

Preheat the oven to 200C / Gas 6. Lightly butter 5 ramekins, dariole or small ovenproof pudding moulds.
Melt the butter and chocolate in a bowl over a pan of hot water. In a separate bowl, whisk together the sugar, eggs and yolks until thick and pale in colour, then fold into the chocolate and butter mixture.
Sieve the flour and cocoa powder together, and fold into the chocolate mixture. Spoon this mixture into the ramekins (at this point the batter can be left in the fridge for up to a day). Cook for 7-8 mins in the oven until just firm to the touch.
Turn out the puddings carefully and dust with icing sugar – Serve (careful as these are very hot inside)