

It's not all about the eggs

Local chefs conjure up some wonderful recipes to make your Easter weekend an even tastier time

WITH two Bank Holidays to look forward to, the Easter weekend provides a welcome mini-break. It's a time for relaxing with family and friends, and enjoying food.

Lamb is a traditional dish for Easter, often served as a roast for Sunday.

Gilli Davies' slow-roast lamb shank recipe offers an alternative, which can be prepared in advance, allowing the cook greater freedom to go out and about during the day.

Simmnel cake is another Easter staple.

It differs from Christmas cake in that it's much lighter, and is crammed with light, bright flavours such as candied lemon peel.

It has been eaten since medieval times as a rich treat, and as a ritual: the 11 marzipan balls that decorate the cake represent the 11 apostles of Christ - minus Judas.

An easier alternative is the luscious fruit loaf from Topstak's Gallery Cafe.

This keeps well, so is a handy item to have in the cupboard if guests drop by over the holiday.

And if you have some veggie guests to stay with you, Jim Dobson, award-winning chef at the Fox and Hounds, Llancarfan, has conjured up a delicious gnocchi with wild garlic.



> Welsh lamb cooked by Gilli Davies

This dish is taken from Gilli Davies' *Welsh Lamb Cookbook*, published by Graffeg and shortlisted for the International Gourmand Awards, the finals of which take place in China in May.

Welsh lamb shanks with thyme

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 4 lamb shanks
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 2 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 2 sticks of celery, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- Handful of fresh thyme
- Bottle white wine
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Topping:

- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley

- Grated rind of 1 lemon
- 1 garlic clove, crushed

In a large, ovenproof casserole, fry the lamb shanks fast to brown all over.

Remove the lamb from the pan, add the onion, carrots, celery and garlic and cook until they colour.

Add the thyme, white wine and seasoning and boil up well. Return the lamb to the pan, cover and cook very

slowly, on a low heat, for approximately 2 hours, until the meat is tender. Leave to cool and chill overnight.

The next day, remove any fat from the top and place the lamb in a covered dish.

Heat in the oven at 180°C/350°F/Gas 5 for half an hour, or until the juices are bubbling right through.

Sprinkle over the topping just before serving.



STRAIGHT OFF THE VINE

Neil Cammies

AS YOU may have noticed since the proliferation of Easter eggs on supermarket shelves since January, the Easter weekend is finally upon us.

If, like me, you have no idea when it is (as it moves around like a shire horse on roller skates) then a reminder is always handy - especially if you are having family or friends around for a bit of a nosh-up and to make the most of the Bank Holiday Monday that follows.

The traditional Easter meat seems to be lamb - something we are rather good at producing in Wales.

The usual accompaniment with a great big leg of lamb and all the trimmings is mint sauce.

So what wine do you choose to go with



The smart money is on cabernet sauvignon, as this grape should show lively juiciness throughout

this delightful meal? The smart money is on cabernet sauvignon, as this grape should show lively juiciness throughout and can have a touch of mint-leaf freshness in there as well, making it a banger with lamb.

We start with a very intriguing wine, the COTEAUX LES CEDRES 2014 (£11.99, Co-op). Not only is it from the Lebanon, in the great wine-making region of the Bekka Valley, but it is an interesting blend of cabernet sauvignon, tempranillo, syrah and arina moa from a Fairtrade co-operative. You can almost feel the sun on the back of the fruit across the bouquet, with a little raisin note to the black and red fruits. On the palate the mouth-filling fruit carries a good lick of acidity and tannins are prominent but sensible.

For those who know of the iconic Lebanese wine Chateau Musar, this is an interesting addition to the Bekka Valley canon.

The WARWICK ESTATE CAPE LADY



you know



Jim Dobson, award-winning chef at the Fox and Hounds, Llancafán, in the Vale of Glamorgan

Wild Garlic Gnocchi with Artichoke, Peas & Broad Beans

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 3/4 large baking potatoes
- 1 large egg (yolk only)
- 125g pasta flour (plus extra for dusting)
- Salt
- Bunch wild garlic
- 100g peas
- 100g shelled broad beans
- Small pack of marinated artichoke hearts
- Olive oil
- Knob of butter

Bake potatoes in oven at 180°C for 1½ hours or until soft. Remove from oven, leave for 15 minutes to cool slightly then cut in half and scoop out the middle into a mixing bowl and mash until smooth.

Weigh out 1kg of the potato, add one egg yolk, mix then sieve in the flour and salt. Mix together with the chopped wild garlic to form a dough.

Leave dough to rest for 15 minutes. Cut dough into four pieces then on a floured surface roll the dough into a thin sausage about the diameter of a 20p then cut into 2cm pieces and place on a floured tray.

Bring a pan of salted water to the boil, then quickly add gnocchi to the pan in small batches. They should start to float after a few seconds, at this point you need to remove the gnocchi with a slotted spoon and put into a bowl of iced water to cool.

Remove from iced water into a bowl with a



> Wild garlic gnocchi with artichoke, peas and broad beans

little oil to stop them sticking together while you prepare the rest of the dish.

In a hot non-stick frying pan with a splash of oil quickly sauté the artichoke, peas and broad beans, remove from pan on to plate then add a little more oil. Gently place one portion of gnocchi into the pan – be careful as they might break apart. Add a knob of butter and let it foam in the pan to crisp up the gnocchi slightly.

Put the peas, beans and artichoke back into the pan, season with salt and pepper, mix then spoon on to the serving plate.

Garnish with pea shoots or freshly chopped herbs.

From Ella Orcuk, at Topstak's Galley Cafe based near Cowbridge

Easy Easter fruit loaf

Ingredients:

- 180g chopped dried apricots
- 180g chopped stoned dates
- 150g currants
- 150g golden sultanas
- 180ml sunflower oil
- 2 bananas, mashed
- 200ml orange or apple juice
- 80g dark brown sugar

- Grated zest of 1 unwaxed lemon or 2 clementines
- 400g self-raising flour
- 2 rounded teaspoons mixed spice

Soften the apricots, dates, in 300ml warm water for about 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 180°C.

Oil a 25cm loaf tin and line its base and sides with parchment paper.

Drain the fruits and set aside the soaking liquid in case you need it.

Put the fruits in a bowl, and add the currants, sultanas, bananas, apple or

orange juice, sugar, oil and lemon or clementines zest. Set aside.

In another bowl, sift together flour and mixed spice.

Mix these dry ingredients into the wet fruit mixture and stir carefully to get a soft, wet consistency. If the mixture is too dry and stiff, add some of the soaking liquid.

Spoon into the prepared baking tin for about an hour or until a cake tester inserted in the centre of the cake comes out clean.

Cool the cake in the tin before taking it out.



> Easter fruit cake by Topstak

COCKTAIL HOUR... THE SURREALIST

Now I love a drop of Calvados and picked up a cheeky bottle of VSOP a while back that was on offer in some booze emporium or other. Then I got to thinking, 'I wonder if there's a nice cocktail that utilises this fine spirit'. And guess what? I found a doozy.

Ingredients

- 5cl Calvados
- some segments of orange
- few stoned cherries

- 1.5cl blackcurrant liqueur or cassis
- Good ginger beer (I went for Fever Tree)

Method

Muddle the fruit (squish it about a bit) in the bottom of an old-fashioned glass (weighty tumbler). Pop a good handful of ice on top and add the Calvados then top up with ginger beer. Finally drizzle some cassis on top so it sort of bleeds down. And enjoy this very grown-up but oh-so-refreshing cocktail

CABERNET SAUVIGNON (RSP £8.50, Morrisons) has classic deep blackcurrant fruit on the nose, showing some warming wood notes and a little rich mocha tone.

Initially the fruit shows a tartness in the mouth, but this fattens out as it develops in the glass – although there is a constant freshness throughout and weight is provided by firm tannins in this accurate and hugely enjoyable cabernet from this fine South African winery.

Another great foodie all-rounder which again

works well with a bit of lamb is Rioja, but with the huge range to choose from, what do you go with?

It obviously depends on your budget, but crianza has a bit of barrel and bottle age and you should go for one from a great Bodega. One such example is the

VIÑA REAL



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CRianza 2013 RIOJA (RRP £11.65, Fortnum & Mason, D Byrne & Co, Cheers Wine Merchant, Hailsham Cellars, Hot Corks). Red fruits are amplified on the nose from 12 months ageing in French and American oak that give a balance of finesse and roundness to the wine.

This blend of tempranillo, garnacha and mazuelo has a classy mouthfeel as the crisp acidity lightens everything up, giving the wine a lovely “journey” across the palate. And it's this versatility that makes this wine equally enjoyable on its own or with food. Juicy through the mid-palate, the finish is bright, refreshing and moreish – in fact, just what you want from your Rioja.



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