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FOREWORD

After many years of cooking and creating recipes, many of which I demonstrated to members of the public in my Cotswold kitchen, life suddenly changed when I became a carer for my husband. With extra household chores and a family of three teenagers to feed I had to rethink my style of cooking. I began by taking a fresh look at some of the ready-prepared ingredients available to me on the supermarket shelves and putting all my experience to the test by creating a completely new range of recipes. I called myself the 'Lazy Cook'.

Enjoying a weekend brunch is a relaxed way of entertaining friends or guests and the section headed *Breakfast & Brunch* recommends recipes to make the kitchen a relaxed place as well.

Everyone loves a party but being the host can be quite daunting so there's always the temptation to buy the canapés. But showing off your culinary skills to your friends needn't be stressful or difficult and in *Let's Party* I give you simple canapé recipes, which are prepared in advance so you can enjoy yourself and play the perfect hostess.

As well as recipes covering everyday cooking, you will find a section headed *From Plot to Pot*, recommending unusual ways of cooking your garden produce.

Cooking with children can be so much fun and is an important life skill for them to learn. In *Food for Hungry Tums*, you'll find a selection of easy recipes to cook with the kids. And for special treats, I've included some easy baking ideas in *Grandma, Can We Make Some Cakes?*

Whether you are a new mum keen to give baby healthy, home-cooked meals or a more experienced parent looking for some short cuts in the

kitchen, *The Lazy Cook's Family Favourites* is for you. Using seasonal ingredients, these recipes are quick and easy to prepare and are ideally suited to the busy lifestyle of today's family.

If you have a wealth of experience of cooking or none at all, my Lazy Cook recipes will give novices confidence in the kitchen and new recipes and flavours for talented cooks to add to their repertoire. To make things even simpler for you, I've highlighted the recipes that are especially quick and easy to make with my Quick Fix star. There is also space for you to make your own comments on the 'Lazy Cook Notes' pages.

Armed with this book you are sure to impress not only yourself but your friends and family too.

Mo Smith

The Lazy Cook

ANCHOVY & SWEET TOMATO RELISH

Another Lazy Cook classic. This is quick and easy to make from everyday ingredients. It will add such interest to your meals, be they snacks, sauces or bite-sized savouries to serve with drinks.

75 g (3 oz) of fresh anchovy fillets
2 teaspoons of oil from the anchovies
4 heaped teaspoons of Italian tomato purée
2 teaspoons of runny honey



Blend all the ingredients together to form a smooth paste.

Store in an airtight container and keep refrigerated. Use within 7 days.

To serve, spread onto bite-sized pieces of toast or small pastry bases (see p29) to serve as canapés with drinks before a meal or at a party.



OTHER USES FOR SERVING:

On breakfast toast

With cold salmon

On hard-boiled eggs (slice the egg in half and top with the relish)

Stirred into rice or pasta

LAZY COOK TIPS

It is essential to use fresh anchovies preserved in oil and sold by weight by a reputable fishmonger or supermarket fish counter.

LAZY CHEESE SOUFFLÉ

If you doubt your culinary skills will extend to tackling the classic soufflé I feel sure you will be able to handle this simplified version which is just as delicious.

Serves 4

6 slices of bread (brown or white)
225 g (8 oz) of grated cheese
425 ml (1.5 fl oz) of whole milk
3 large eggs
Freshly ground white pepper
2 teaspoons of Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon of anchovy essence

Set the oven to gas mark 4/180°C/350°F/Aga baking oven.

Layer the bread and cheese into a soufflé or pie dish, beginning and ending with bread.

In a measuring jug, whisk the eggs, add the mustard and anchovy essence and season with pepper.

Warm the milk, then add it to the eggs and whisk together.

Pour through a sieve over the layered bread and leave for 15-20 minutes.

Stand the dish on a baking tray and bake in the preheated oven for 30-40 minutes, or until risen.

Serve straight from the oven as a starter, or with peas, mangetout, or salad as a light meal.

LAZY COOK TIPS

This is a good recipe for using up ends of cheese, especially Stilton which will give excellent flavour.

It can be prepared and left for a longer period before baking if it suits your time plan.

BAKED AVOCADO WITH GOAT'S CHEESE

Avocados are usually sliced and served cold. Cooking them with additional ingredients, as in this recipe, turns them into an unusual and nutritious light meal.

Serves 4
2 avocados
4 teaspoons of apple purée
4 slices of goat's cheese



Set oven to gas mark 6/200°C/400°F/Aga roasting oven.

Slice each avocado in half lengthways and remove and discard the centre stone.

Fill each cavity with apple purée and top with a slice of goat's cheese.

Transfer to a shallow ovenproof dish or metal tray and bake in the preheated oven for 10-15 minutes, or until the cheese has melted.

Serve hot from the oven with salad and fresh rolls.



LAZY COOK TIPS

Slice a little flesh from the base of each avocado half so that they will stand firm while cooking.

If the avocado is a little unripe baking will soften it. They can also be cooked under a grill.

You can use shop-bought apple purée or prepare your own (see p215).

Use small avocados if serving as a starter.

BAKED COD WITH GRAPES POACHED IN VANILLA & HONEY

Serves 4

700 g (1½ lb) fillet of cod

25 g (1 oz) of butter

50 g (2 oz) of fresh or dried breadcrumbs (see p223)

For the grapes see recipe below

Set the oven to gas mark 6/200°C/400°F/Agar roasting oven.

Cover the base of a shallow ovenproof dish with a film of cold water. Wipe the fish with damp kitchen roll before placing it, skin-side down, into the dish. Sprinkle with breadcrumbs and dot with shavings of butter before baking in the preheated oven for 10-15 minutes, or until the fish is firm to the touch. Serve straight from the oven on individual hot plates, or in a hot serving dish. Place the grapes and juices on top and around.

GRAPES POACHED IN VANILLA & HONEY

50 ml (2 fl oz) of water

1 teaspoon of runny honey

½ teaspoon of vanilla extract

225 g (8 oz) of green or red seedless grapes

Pour the water into a pan, add the honey and vanilla, and stir over a gentle heat until it is dissolved. Add the grapes, cover and simmer gently for 5 minutes. Serve hot or cold with a fish or meat recipe.

LAZY COOK TIPS

The fish can be baked in one piece or cut into portions. To save time, poach the grapes while the fish is baking.

FISH CHOWDER

A welcoming recipe to serve on a cold winter's day.

Serves 6

- 1 large onion (skinned and chopped)
- 100 g (4 oz) of unsmoked bacon (cut into pieces)
- 2 sticks of celery (sliced)
- 100 g (4 oz) of mushrooms (wiped and sliced)
- 900 g (2 lb) of potatoes (peeled and cut into bite-sized pieces)
- 1 x 400 g tin of sweetcorn (juices drained)
- 700 g (1½ lb) of cod
- 2 tablespoons of flour seasoned with freshly ground white pepper
- 150 ml (5 fl oz) of single cream
- 2 teaspoons of Dijon mustard
- Generous handful of freshly chopped parsley

Soften the onion, bacon, celery and mushrooms in a small amount of boiling water in a large covered pan or casserole dish.

Add the potatoes and top up with sufficient cold water to cover.

Put the lid on the pan and allow to simmer until the potatoes are almost cooked, then add the sweetcorn.

Dry the fish on kitchen roll, then cut into bite-sized pieces and coat in the seasoned flour. Place them on top of the pan ingredients.

Bring back to a simmer, cover and continue simmering for 10 minutes or until the fish has cooked.

Stir in the cream, mustard and parsley and bring back to a simmer, before serving with warm rolls or chunks of bread.

LAZY COOK TIPS

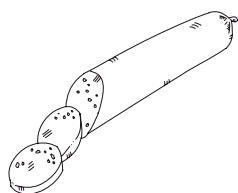
Cod cheeks, which are often available from a good fishmonger, are excellent for this recipe.

If you cook by Aga the simmering process should be done in the simmering oven. Ideal for either lunch or supper.

BEEF CASSEROLE

Serves 4

- 1 large onion (skinned and chopped)
- 450 g (1 lb) of diced braising steak
- 175 g (6 oz) of chorizo slices (skinned)
- 150 ml (5 fl oz) of red wine (optional)
- 150 ml (5 fl oz) of meat stock
- 227 g tin of chopped tomatoes in natural juices
- ½ teaspoon of mixed dried herbs
- Freshly ground black pepper



Set oven at gas mark 6/200°C/400°F/Aga roasting oven.

Heat a little water in a medium-sized casserole dish or pan with a lid.

Add the onion, cover and cook for a few minutes until it begins to soften.

Add all the remaining ingredients, stir, then cover, and put into the preheated oven for 15-20 minutes or until it begins to simmer.

Reduce the oven temperature to gas mark 3/160°C/325°F/Aga simmering oven and continue to cook for 1 hour or until the meat is tender.

LAZY COOK TIPS

Like so many of my recipes, once cooked this can be left to cool and then stored in a fridge or cold larder for a few days before serving. Use within 4 days.

Before reheating, remove any fat which will have risen to the surface.

FILLET STEAK WITH AN ARTICHOKE & APRICOT COMPOTE

Serves 4

4 fillet steaks (cut to a chosen thickness)

1 tablespoon of olive oil

25 g (1 oz) of butter

2 tablespoons of brandy

1 jar of sliced artichokes in oil

8 ready-to-eat dried apricots

½ teaspoon of fresh thyme leaves or ¼ teaspoon dried



Dry the steaks on kitchen roll and brush one side of each with oil.

Heat a large frying or sauté pan, add the butter and, when sizzling, add the prepared steaks and time the cooking according to whether you like them rare, medium or well done (see Lazy Cook Tips). Oil the upper side before turning and remove when cooked to time.

Prepare the compote by draining the artichokes from the oil, chopping them up roughly and adding to the apricots.

Add the brandy to the pan, scrape up any residue from the base and heat until boiling. Add the prepared compote, reduce the heat and stir until hot, seasoning at the end with thyme leaves.

Dish up the steaks on warmed individual plates. Stir any drained juices into the compote and stir before serving alongside the steaks.

Serve with new potatoes and a mixed green salad for a delicious summer meal. In the winter, you may like to accompany the steak with oven chips or jacket potatoes and a green vegetable.

LAZY COOK TIPS

Recommended cooking times: Rare – 2 minutes on each side, medium rare – 3 minutes, well done – 5 minutes.

Ripe, fresh apricots can be used in summer. I also recommend whole artichokes, bought by weight from a delicatessen.

BANGERS & MASH WITH A PICKLE TOPPING

Add sparkle to this ever popular recipe while cutting down on preparation and washing up – highly recommended by the laziest of cooks!

Serves 4

12 sausages

700 g (1½ lb) of potatoes (peeled and chopped into small pieces)

50 g (2 oz) of butter

1 tablespoon of milk

Freshly grated nutmeg

1 large jar of pickled red cabbage

Set the oven at gas mark 6/200°C/400°F/ Aga roasting oven.

Place the sausages in a lightly oiled baking tray and bake in the preheated oven for 15-20 minutes, or until cooked.

Boil the prepared potatoes until they are soft.

Strain off the cooking liquid, add the butter, a tablespoon of milk and freshly grated nutmeg and mash them together until they are creamy and smooth – add more butter or milk if necessary.

Pour the cabbage and vinegar from the jar into a pan and heat.

To serve, pile the mashed potato onto individual hot serving plates, topping each of them with three cooked sausages and the pickled red cabbage, including a little of its accompanying vinegar.

LAZY COOK TIPS

The sausages can be cooked under a grill.

A little milk added to the potatoes will help to cut down on the fat content.

Pickled red cabbage adds flavour, colour and a crunchy texture to the traditional Bangers and Mash – it is also quicker than making gravy!

THE HUMBLE CABBAGE GETS A MAKEOVER

Serves 6-8

- 1 large cabbage (preferably dark leaves)
- 25 g (1 oz) of butter
- 1-2 tablespoons of olive oil
- 1 large onion (skinned and sliced)
- 1 packet of smoked streaky bacon (cut into 3 cm/ 1 inch pieces)
- 1 ring of black pudding
(skinned and cut into slices approximately 1 cm/ ½ inch thick)
- 110 g packet of chorizo
(skinned and cut into slices approximately ½ cm/ ¼ inch thick)
- 1 large orange (zest and juice)

Slice the cabbage and wash under a cold running tap. Transfer it to a large saucepan containing approximately 300 ml (10 fl oz) of water. Cover and boil until the cabbage begins to soften (around 5 minutes), stirring from time to time. Add a little more boiling water if necessary to prevent burning.

Drain off all of the excess water. Return the pan to a gentle heat and stir in the butter to dry off any excess moisture. Then remove the cooked cabbage from the pan.

Heat the oil in the pan, add the prepared onion and bacon, cover and cook for a few minutes.

Meanwhile, prepare the black pudding and chorizo. Mix them into the onion mixture and cook until heated, stirring regularly. Add the cooked cabbage, orange juice and zest. Stir over a gentle heat until hot throughout before serving.

LAZY COOK TIPS

The water drained from the cabbage can be kept in a fridge to use when cooking other vegetables, or to add to soups, sauces and gravies. Use within 3 days.

This recipe is delicious and is especially good when served with calf's or lamb's liver.

BREAD PUDDING WITH AN ORANGE & GINGER WINE SAUCE

I remember well the bread pudding my mother used to make and which I loved. My recipe is, I think, equally delicious, but is much quicker to make. The ginger wine sauce makes it a very special pudding to serve on all occasions.

Serves 6

100 g (4 oz) of fresh breadcrumbs

100 ml (4 fl oz) of milk

1 dessertspoon of black treacle

1 tablespoon of marmalade

25 g (1 oz) of shredded suet

½ teaspoon of mixed spice

100 g (4 oz) of dried apricots (sliced)

Orange & Ginger Wine Sauce (see opposite)

Heat the milk and stir in the treacle until it has dissolved. Add all the remaining ingredients and stir well.

Pack into a lightly oiled pie dish and leave to rest for 15-30 minutes.

Sprinkle with a little demerara sugar and bake for 30-40 minutes (gas mark 4/180°C/350°F/Aga baking oven).

Serve hot or cold with Ginger Wine Sauce or custard.

LAZY COOK TIPS

This recipe can also be served as a cake – when cold cut it into wedges.

For a more eye-catching presentation, prepare it as follows. Smear butter over the base of a pie dish and cover with demerara sugar. Arrange the whole apricots on top before covering with the pudding mixture.

Bake as directed in the recipe, but to serve, turn it out onto a hot serving plate. Serve the Ginger Wine Sauce separately.

ORANGE & GINGER WINE SAUCE

I was first introduced to ginger wine by a dear friend and neighbour, who one year invited me to help decorate the church in readiness for the annual service of remembrance. After the service I would return to her kitchen and enjoy a glass of ginger wine. These memories return each autumn and Christmas when a glass of ginger wine is a warm and comforting treat on a frosty winter day. I could not resist combining it with another favourite winter flavour - oranges, and including them in my winter recipe development.

1 fresh orange (grated zest and juice)
1 teaspoon of orange flower water (optional)
50 ml (2 fl oz) of ginger wine

Put all the ingredients together in a pan and simmer for a few minutes, stirring constantly.

Serve at once or prepare in advance and reheat to serve.

LAZY COOK TIPS

This is a delicious sauce to serve with numerous puddings or ice-creams. It can be stored in a covered container in a fridge or cold larder.

Orange flower water is a useful ingredient to have in store and can be added to many cake and pudding recipes as it has a very delicate flavour.

It can be bought from most delicatessens and some supermarkets.

SUGAR-FREE FRUIT CAKE

If you are trying to diet but crave a slice of cake, this is the recipe for you.

225 g (8 oz) of plain flour
2 teaspoons of baking powder
1 teaspoon of mixed spice
100 g (4 oz) of margarine (softened)
2 large eggs
100 ml (4 fl oz) of milk
½ teaspoon of vanilla extract
225 g (8 oz) of mixed dried fruit
6-8 walnut halves (optional)

Set the oven to gas mark 4/180°C/350°F/Aga baking oven.

Drop a parchment cake liner into an 18 cm (7 inch) cake tin.

Mix the flour, baking powder and spice in a food processor, add the margarine, eggs, milk and vanilla extract and blend until smooth.

Add the dried fruit, processing only for a few moments.

Pour the mixture into the prepared tin, smooth the top and press walnut halves round the edge.

Stand the tin on a baking tray and bake for 1¼-1½ hours, or until set (test with a metal skewer).

Remove the cake from the oven and after a few minutes remove the cake from the tin, leaving it to cool on a wire tray. Slice to serve.

Store in an airtight tin or container.

LAZY COOK TIPS

This cake is popular with anyone following a sugar-free diet.

But remember that although no sugar is added to this recipe, mixed dried fruit does contain a little sugar.

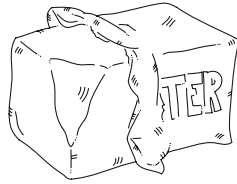
Check before serving to someone with diabetes.

DATE & OAT CHOCOLATE BLOCKS

Another recipe to involve the children, who will have great fun making and eating these.

Makes 25

- 50 g (2 oz) of porridge oats (browned)
- 175 g (6 oz) of unsalted butter or margarine
- 25 g (1 oz) of cocoa powder
- 2 tablespoons of golden syrup
- 175 g (6 oz) of digestive biscuits (crushed)
- 175 g (6 oz) of stoned dates (each cut into 3 pieces)
- 100 g (4 oz) of chocolate (dark or milk)



Use a strip of foil to line the base and ends of a 20 cm (8 inch) square baking tin and butter lightly.

Brown the oats under a grill or in the roasting oven of an Aga.

Melt the butter in a pan, stir in the cocoa powder and syrup before adding the biscuits, oats and dates and stir together.

Pack into the prepared tin and press down firmly. Melt the chocolate and spread evenly on top.

When cold, remove from the tin and cut into wedges. Store in an airtight tin or container.

LAZY COOK TIPS

The biscuits can be crushed in a food processor or by breaking them into pieces, putting them in a polythene bag and rolling with a rolling pin.
