

Creamy Smoked Salmon Spread

Prep time – 10 minutes. Makes about 1 cup

Ingredients

250g smoked salmon	1 tsp horseradish
1/2 cup cream cheese	1 tbsp finely chopped fresh dill
1/2 cup crème fraîche	Zest of 1 lemon
1 tsp Dijon mustard	1 tsp lemon juice, plus extra to taste

Method

Add the salmon, cream cheese, crème fraîche, mustard, horseradish, dill, lemon zest and lemon juice to a food processor. Process to a nearly smooth consistency, scraping down the sides once or twice with a spatula. Taste and add more lemon juice if you like. Season with pepper (white or cracked black), and salt only if it needs it.

Serve spread on crackers or very fresh white bread, either by itself or with thinly sliced red onion, capers, dill, sliced gherkin etc.

Santapés

Ingredients

1 punnet ripe tomato berries	4-5 slices prosciutto, torn into small pieces (optional)
1 pottle fresh small mozzarella or bocconcini balls	2 tablespoons balsamic glaze/reduction (use bought or make your own see below)
1 bunch fresh basil leaves	

Method

You may need to cut your skewers first if they're too long – else they will look silly sticking a long way out the top. Make sure you cut them on a diagonal to create a sharp point, or you'll mush Santa as you poke it in.

Using a sharp knife, slice only the very top part of the tomatoes off, just so that they have a more stable surface to sit on. Here's a tip – only cut off the very thinnest slice you can, to avoid cutting into the fleshy seeded part. Otherwise the juice can run out and look messy on the platter.

Slice the tomato in two even halves. The top you've sliced will be the base. The pointed bottom is the 'hat' to go on top.

Slice a ball of cheese into even slices, and place a slice on the tomato base. Top with a piece of folded prosciutto, a basil leaf, and season with salt (and pepper if you like). Gently place the top on, holding it all steady as you insert the skewer to hold everything in place.

Squirt a small blob of balsamic glaze on to a platter (no bigger than a 5c piece). Gently place the Santa on top. Repeat until all the ingredients are used up. Best served straight away but you can keep them in the fridge for an hour or so on a plate, and put them on the platter with the balsamic just before you serve.

Balsamic reduction

Place 1 cup balsamic vinegar in a small saucepan with ½ cup packed brown sugar. Simmer thickened, about 5 minutes or so. Leave to cool before using it (it will thicken up more as it cools as well).

Spinach, feta & roast garlic dip

Ingredients

2 whole bulbs NZ garlic	1 ½ tbsp. lemon juice
300g baby spinach (or spinach leaves, stalks removed)	2 tbsp finely chopped shallot
1 cup cream cheese	Zest of 1 lemon
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil	1/2 cup pine nuts
	100g feta, crumbled

Method

Preheat the oven to 180c. Slice the very top off the garlic bulbs to expose the cloves inside. Place in a roasting dish drizzle with olive oil and roast in the oven for 35 minutes. Add the pine nuts to the tray and cook another 4 minutes or until the nuts are golden brown (keep an eye on them so they don't burn). Remove and cool.

Bring a saucepan with a 1cm of water to a boil. Add the spinach, cover and cook for a couple of minutes, swishing the pot a couple of times to help wilt the spinach. Drain in a colander then immediately plunge into a bowl of iced water to cool it down quickly. Squeeze out as much excess moisture as you can.

Add cream cheese, olive oil, lemon juice, shallot, lemon zest to a food processor along with the roasted garlic squeezed out of the skins. Process until smooth. Add the spinach, pine nuts and feta and process so it's still slightly chunky. Season to taste with salt and pepper, and extra lemon juice if you like.

Refrigerate until needed.

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Corn, courgette and feta fritters

Ingredients

1/2 cup milk	2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley leaves
2 tsp lemon juice	2 tbsp finely chopped fresh chives, plus extra to serve
4 free-range eggs	1 clove garlic, crushed
2 courgettes	3/4 cup self-raising flour
1x 400g can sweetcorn kernels, drained (or use fresh, see tip)	1/4 tsp baking soda
1/2 red onion, thinly sliced	Butter for frying
1/2 cup feta, crumbled	

To Serve

Sour cream or crème fraîche

Cooked crispy bacon

Method

Preheat the oven to 50°C.

Add the milk and lemon juice to a non-metallic bowl and leave to sit for 5 minutes. Separate the eggs, with the yolks going into a large mixing bowl and the whites into a medium-sized mixing bowl.

Shave the courgettes into thin slices with a potato peeler. Beat the egg yolks until pale, add the courgette slices, sweetcorn, red onion, feta, herbs and garlic, and stir to combine. Sift the flour and baking soda into the egg mixture. Add the soured milk and mix to a smooth batter. If it looks too runny, sift in another 3 tablespoons of flour.

Whisk the egg whites until soft peaks form, then fold through the batter.

Heat 1 tablespoon of butter in a large frying pan over a medium-high heat. After the butter has frothed but before it goes brown, add about 1/2 cup of batter for each fritter. Cook until golden brown on one side, then turn over and fry until cooked through.

Transfer to a plate, keep warm in the oven and repeat with the remaining batter.

You can serve the fritters by themselves, with a salad, or with sour cream and bacon for extra deliciousness.

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Berry delicious Rocky Road

Makes one regular slice tin. Prep time – 20 minutes

Ingredients

500g good-quality dark eating chocolate (at least 50% cocoa)	1/2 cup Turkish delight, chopped
50g butter	1/2 cup soft berry flavoured fruit jellies
6-7 plain sweet biscuits, broken into pieces	3/4 cup desiccated or shredded coconut, plus extra for top
1/2 cup whole almonds	1½ cups marshmallows

Method

Line a slice tin with baking paper all the way up the sides.

Break the chocolate into rough pieces, and place along with the butter in a heatproof bowl sitting over a saucepan of simmering water. Leave until melted, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat and let cool slightly.

Add the biscuit pieces, almonds, Turkish Delight, jellies, coconut and marshmallows to the chocolate and mix to combine. Scrape into the tin and press into an even layer. Sprinkle with extra coconut. Cover and refrigerate until cold and set, then cut with a hot knife. Keep in the fridge in an airtight container for a couple of weeks.

Luscious lemon & coconut bliss balls

• Sweetened with honey • Gluten-free • Dairy-free

Ingredients

2 ½ cups desiccated coconut, plus extra for dusting	1/3 cup honey (1/2 cup if you like it sweeter)
1 cups raw unsalted cashew nuts	Zest of 4-5 lemons
3/4 cup sunflower seeds	1 tbsp lemon juice
1/2 cup extra virgin coconut oil (maybe it needs only 1/3 cup)	1/4 tsp fine salt

Method

Add all the ingredients to a food processor and process/pulse until smooth – stop and scrape down the sides a couple of times so the mixture combines easily.

Using clean, slightly wet cold hands, roll into walnut-sized balls. Add extra coconut to a bowl and coat each ball. Keep in the fridge in an airtight container for whenever you need a little splash of lemony sweetness in your day.