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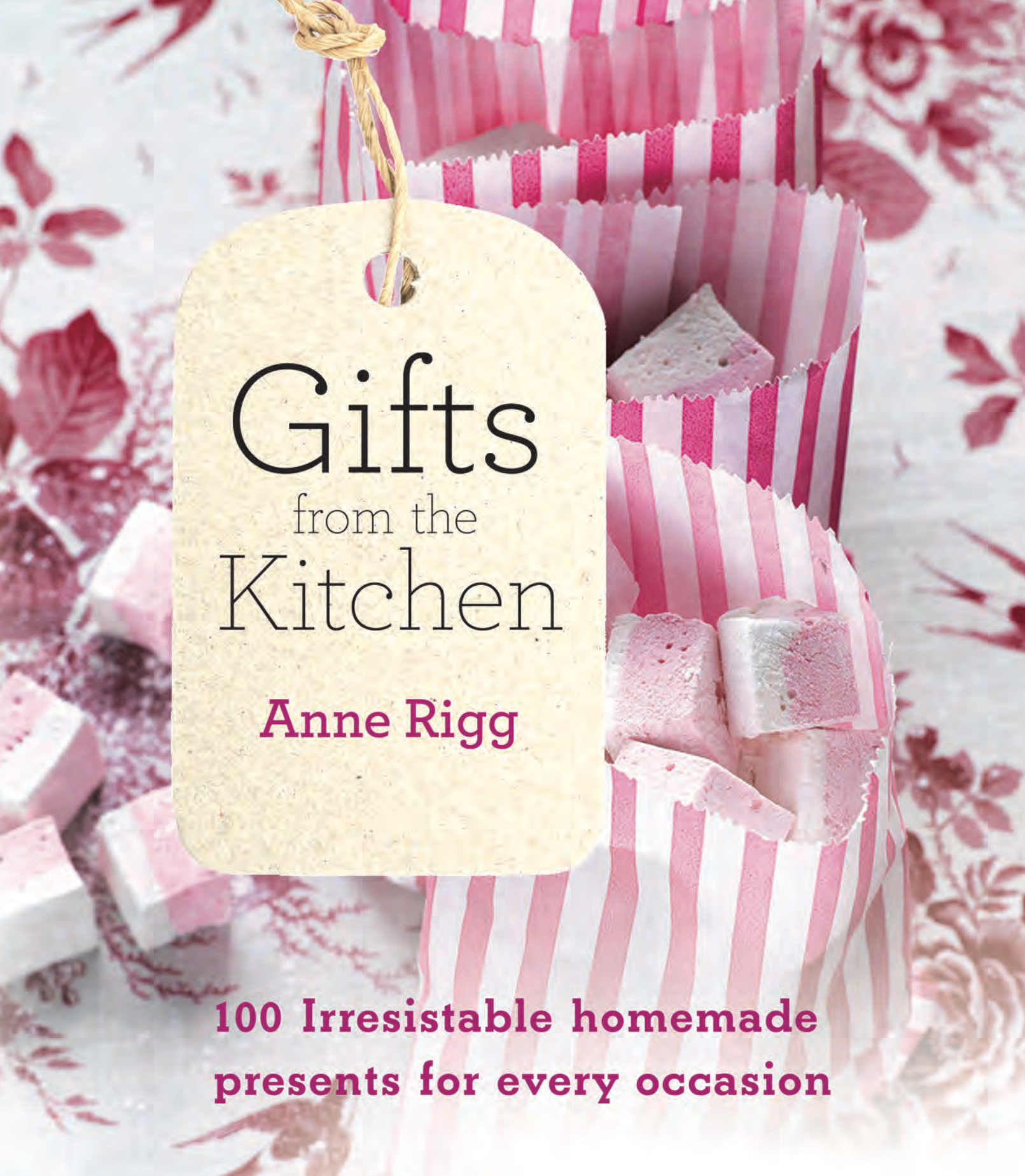
Gifts from the Kitchen

Written by Annie Rigg

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Gifts from the Kitchen

Anne Rigg

100 Irresistable homemade presents for every occasion

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Lollipops

Use food-colouring pastes to tint these lollies whatever shade you desire. The colours are stronger, more varied, and each little pot seems to last for ever. If you can't get hold of a lolly mould, try setting the lollies in very well-greased round cutters or crumpet rings placed on a sheet of baking parchment. Remove the rings just before the lollies set solid, and firmly press a lolly stick into each one. Or you could try making them free-form for a more homemade look!

MAKES 6 LOLLIPOPS

sunflower oil, for greasing
300g granulated sugar
150g golden syrup
½ rounded teaspoon cream of tartar
2 teaspoons peppermint or lemon extract
2 contrasting food colouring pastes

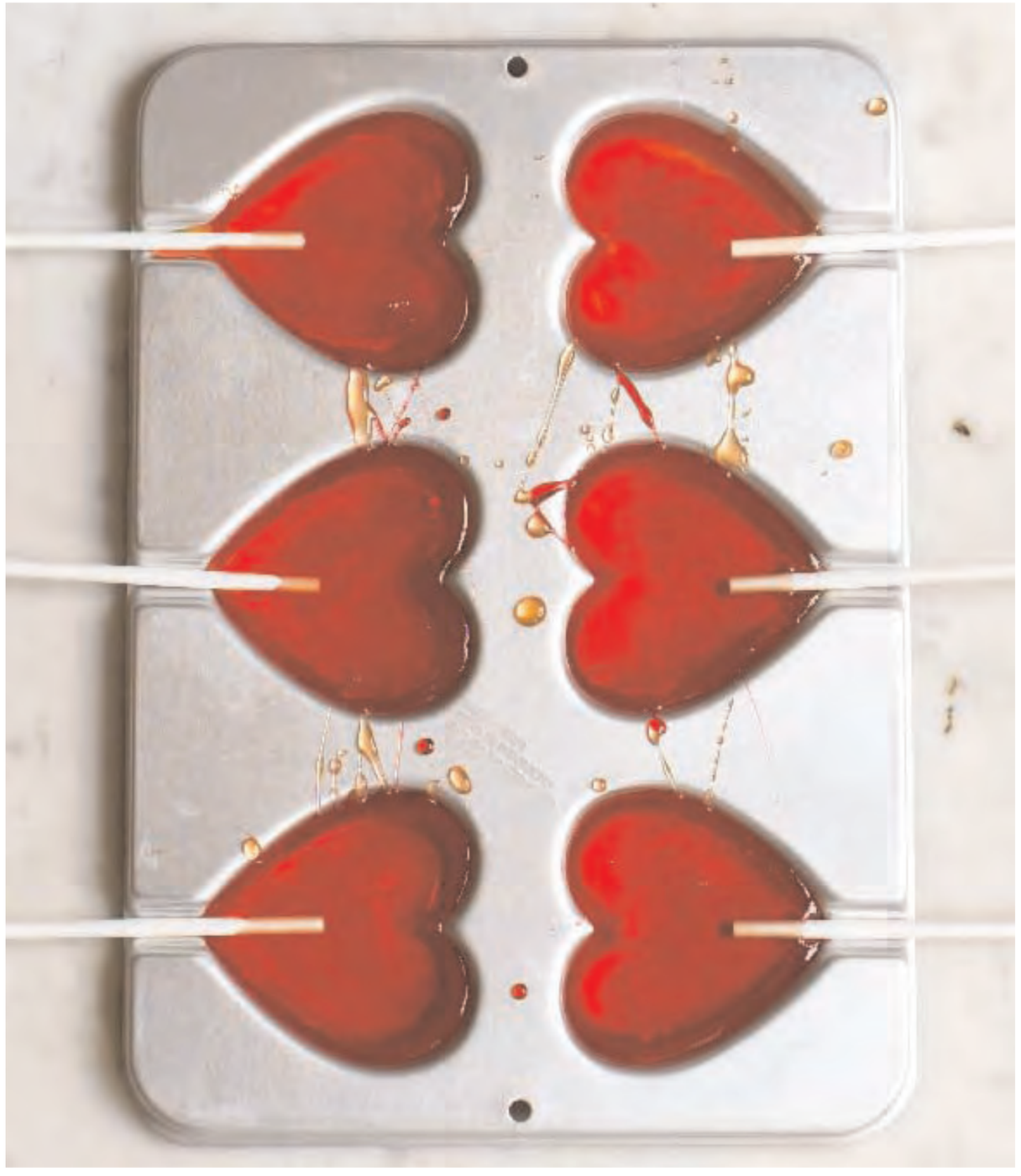
Grease a 6-hole lolly mould with sunflower oil and line the bottom of each hole with a heart shape of greased baking parchment.

Tip the sugar and syrup into a small pan. Add the cream of tartar and 175ml of water. Set the pan over a gentle heat and warm slowly until the sugar has dissolved. Bring to a steady boil and continue to cook for about 10 minutes, until it reaches the 'hard crack' stage, 154°C/310°F on a sugar thermometer. Immediately remove from the heat and add the peppermint or lemon extract, swirling the pan to mix in evenly.

Pour roughly three-quarters of the mixture into a small warmed bowl and the rest into another. Add one of the food colourings to the larger quantity and the other to the smaller amount. Stir quickly until each mixture is evenly coloured.

Spoon the first mixture into the greased lolly moulds. Drizzle with the second mixture and lightly swirl the two together using a wooden skewer. Place a lolly stick into each lolly and leave to set until solid and completely cold before removing from the moulds.

Wrap individually in cellophane.
The lollies are best eaten on the day of making.



Raspberry and Rose Chocolate Wafers

Line 2 large baking sheets with non-stick baking parchment.

Break the dark and white chocolate into pieces and melt separately in heatproof bowls set over pans of barely simmering water. Stir until smooth, remove from the heat and cool slightly. Spoon heaped teaspoonfuls of melted chocolate on to the prepared baking sheets, spreading the chocolate into discs with the back of the spoon. Scatter with the raspberry crispies, rose petals and rose chips or sugar sprinkles.

Set aside to cool and harden completely before removing from the parchment with a palette knife.

Stored in an airtight container, these will keep for 4–5 days.

MAKES ABOUT 24 WAFERS

150g best-quality dark chocolate (72% cocoa solids)

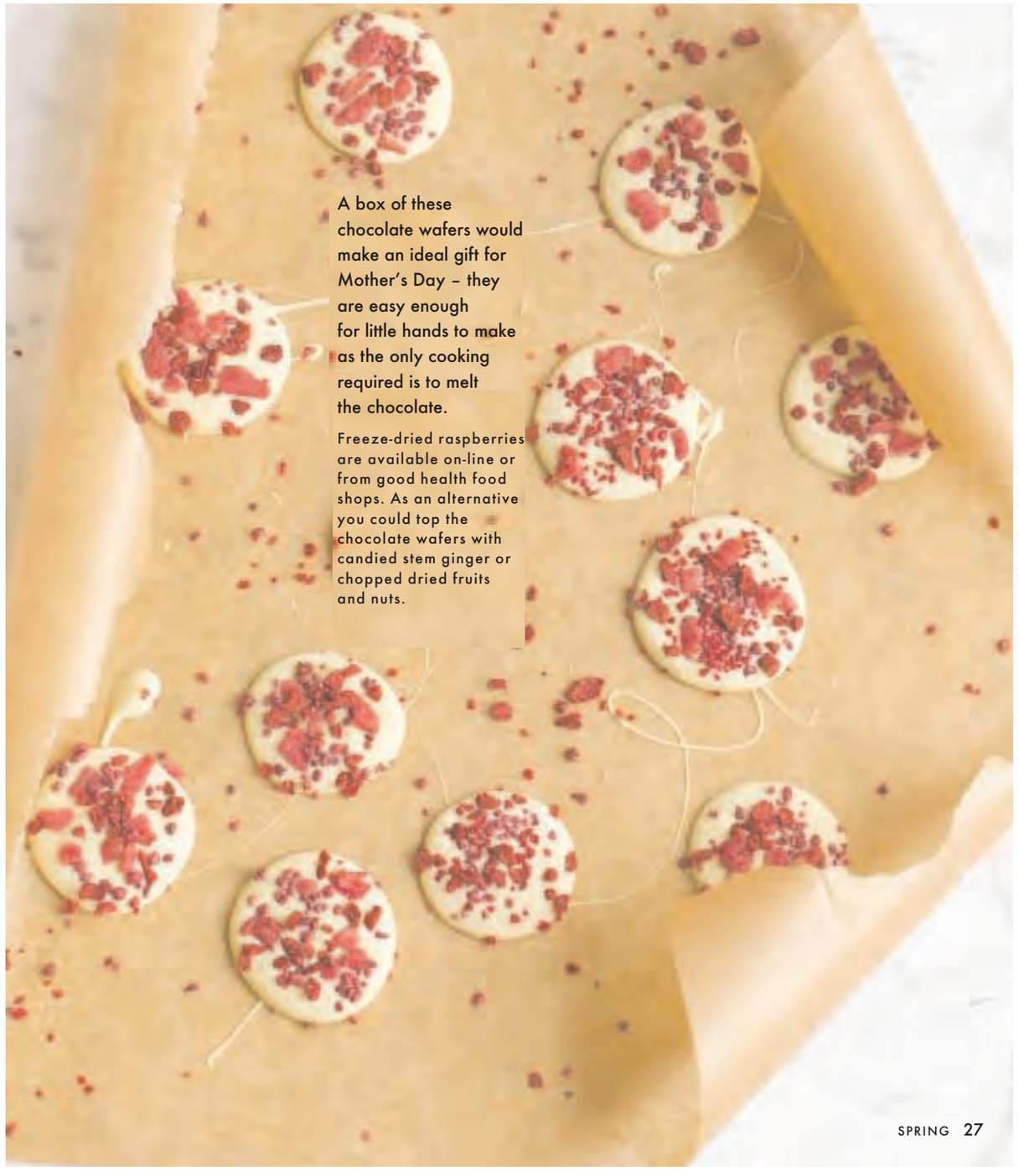
150g best-quality white chocolate

3–4 tablespoons freeze-dried raspberry crispies (approx. 25g)

3–4 tablespoons crystallized rose petals

3–4 tablespoons pink sugared rose chips or sugar sprinkles





A box of these chocolate wafers would make an ideal gift for Mother's Day – they are easy enough for little hands to make as the only cooking required is to melt the chocolate.

Freeze-dried raspberries are available on-line or from good health food shops. As an alternative you could top the chocolate wafers with candied stem ginger or chopped dried fruits and nuts.

Candied Citrus Peel

This recipe makes enough candied peel to make up a number of small gifts. They are delicious eaten just as they are or you could take them to the next level and half dip them in very dark melted chocolate. Or for the keen baker they can be packaged into pretty screw-top glass jars to be used in baking.

MAKES ENOUGH FOR 2–3 GIFTS

2 oranges
1 pink grapefruit
1 lemon
500g caster sugar
1 vanilla pod
½ teaspoon black peppercorns, lightly crushed
4 cardamom pods, lightly crushed
dark chocolate to coat (optional)

Using a small, sharp knife, cut through the skins of the oranges, through the peel and pith and just down to the fruit, dividing the oranges into quarter segments. Carefully remove the peel still in the quarters, trying to leave as much of the pith attached to the skin as possible. Repeat with the grapefruit and lemon. Slice each piece of peel into strips no wider than 1cm. Discard the fruit.

Place the strips in a large saucepan, cover with cold water and bring to the boil. Simmer for 2–3 minutes, then drain through a colander. Repeat this blanching twice more, using fresh water each time. This will remove any bitterness from the peel.

Wash and dry the saucepan. Place the sugar and 500ml water in the rinsed-out pan. Split the vanilla pod in half down its length, and add to the pan with the black peppercorns and cardamom pods. Bring slowly to the boil, stirring from time to time to dissolve the sugar. Add the blanched citrus peels and reduce the heat to a very gentle simmer. Continue to cook for around 2–3 hours, until the peels are very tender and become translucent. This time will vary depending on the variety of fruit used and how thickly you have cut the peels.

Using tongs, remove the peels from the syrup, draining off any excess, and put them on a large sheet of non-stick baking parchment in a single layer. Leave the candied peels to dry and for the sugar to crystallise – this can take anything up to 2–3 days, but will depend on the temperature of your kitchen.

The candied peels can be left as they are but are all the more delicious for being half coated in melted dark chocolate.



Toss the candied peels in caster sugar before packaging. In an airtight box or jar, they will keep for up to 1 month.



Marinated Goat's Cheese

Use the small young Crottin goat's cheeses for this recipe and some fine quality, fruity olive oil for the marinade to make this really special. I have suggested using fresh oregano but you could just as easily use a couple of sprigs or rosemary or thyme. A jar of these cheeses would make a tasty addition to any picnic hamper or summer cheese board.

MAKES 1 LARGE JAR

4 young Crottin goat's cheeses
1 bay leaf
½ tablespoon fresh oregano leaves
1 red bird's-eye chilli
1 unwaxed lemon
½ teaspoon fennel seeds
2 cloves of garlic, peeled and halved
extra virgin olive oil, to cover

Pack the cheeses into a sterilised, wide-necked storage jar (see page 168), and add the bay leaf and oregano leaves. Cut the chilli in half through the stalk and pare 2 strips of zest from the lemon. Arrange the chilli and lemon zest around the cheeses. Add the fennel seeds and garlic cloves, and pour over extra virgin olive oil so that the cheeses are completely covered. Seal the jar and chill. Bring back to room temperature to serve.

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week until needed and then drain and eat with some fabulous bread, crumbled into salads or grilled on slices of baguette with a good spoonful of Tomato Chutney (page 85).



Cheese Sablés

Buttery, crumbly, cheesey, just a little spicy and absolutely perfect with a glass of chilled white wine. Coat the outside of these biscuits with a mixture of sesame and kalonji seeds to make them a more sophisticated cocktail nibble.

MAKES ABOUT 24

175g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
1 **teaspoon sea salt**
½ **teaspoon cayenne pepper**
½ **teaspoon dry mustard powder**
1 teaspoon cumin or caraway seeds, lightly crushed
150g unsalted butter, chilled and diced
75g finely grated mature Cheddar cheese
75g finely grated Parmesan cheese
1 tablespoon milk
sesame seeds (optional)
kalonji (black onion) seeds (optional)
freshly ground black pepper

Tip the flour, salt, cayenne, mustard powder, cumin or caraway seeds and some black pepper into the bowl of a food processor. Add the diced butter and use the pulse button to rub it into the dry ingredients. Add the grated cheeses and pulse again until the dough just comes together – you may need to add a drop of cold water.

Tip the dough out on to a lightly floured work surface and roll into a log roughly 5cm in diameter, wrap in clingfilm and chill in the fridge for a couple of hours or until firm.

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4 and line a baking sheet with non-stick baking parchment. Take the log out of the fridge, remove the clingfilm and brush with milk before coating in the sesame and kalonji seeds (if using). Slice the log into discs, roughly 5mm thick, and arrange on the baking sheets, spacing the biscuits well apart.

Bake on the middle shelf of the preheated oven for 12–15 minutes, or until crisp and golden. Once completely cold, the sablés can be packaged.

Stored in an airtight box, they will keep for 4–5 days.



Pecan Snowball Cookies

Dusted with a generous scattering of icing sugar these crumbly, buttery Snowball Cookies are scrumptious with a cup of tea for elevenses.

MAKES 24 COOKIES

125g pecans
150g unsalted butter, softened
100g icing sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
225g plain flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
large pinch of salt
icing sugar, for dusting

Preheat the oven to 150°C/325°F/gas mark 3 and line 2 baking sheets with non-stick baking parchment.

Toast the pecans in the preheated oven for 5–7 minutes. Leave to cool, then chop in a food processor until finely ground.

Cream the softened butter and icing sugar until pale, light and fluffy. Add the vanilla extract and mix again. Sift the flour, baking powder and salt into the bowl, add the ground pecans and mix until smooth and thoroughly combined. Cover the cookie dough and chill for 30 minutes to allow it to firm up.

Roll dessertspoons of the cookie dough into balls and arrange on the baking sheets, spacing them well apart. Bake in batches on the middle shelf of the preheated oven for about 15 minutes, until pale golden. Remove the cookies from the oven and cool slightly.

Dust the cookies liberally with icing sugar and package into pretty bags or boxes once completely cold.

Stored in an airtight container, cookies will keep for 5 days.

Herbal Teas

MAKES 20 TEA BAGS

SLEEPY TEA:

dried camomile
dried lemon balm
dried passiflora
dried rose buds or petals

DE-STRESS TEA:

dried camomile
dried lemon balm
dried lime blossoms
dried passiflora
dried skullcap

Give a box of these herbal tea bags with a beautiful vintage teapot. Ready-to-fill tea bags are usually available from herbalist suppliers – fill them with your selected blend and attach a handmade label to each bag. Alternatively, present the loose tea in glass jars or tea caddies and include instructions for making a brew using a mesh strainer.

Combine equal quantities (50g in total) of each of the dried herbs in a bowl and mix well. Scoop 1 heaped teaspoon of the blend into each tea bag, tie with fine string or cotton and attach a pretty label to each bag.

Stored in an airtight box, these will keep for at least 3 months.



Shortbreads

Here is one basic recipe that can be adapted to make a myriad of shortbread flavours. A tin of these biscuits is somehow reminiscent of childhood and the biscuit assortment box that was brought out on high days and holidays.

MAKES ABOUT 24 IN TOTAL

VANILLA SHORTBREAD:

225g unsalted butter, softened
75g icing sugar, sifted
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
225g plain flour, plus extra for rolling
pinch of salt

CHOCOLATE SHORTBREAD:

225g unsalted butter, softened
75g icing sugar, sifted
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
225g plain flour, plus extra for rolling
50g cocoa
pinch of salt

To make the shortbread dough, cream the softened butter and icing sugar until pale and light. Add the vanilla extract and mix again. Sift the flour (cocoa, if using for the chocolate shortbread) and salt, add to the mixture and beat until smooth. Flatten the dough into a disc, wrap in clingfilm and chill until firm.

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4 and line a baking sheet with non-stick baking parchment. Lightly dust the work surface with plain flour and roll the dough out to a thickness of about 3mm. Using cookie cutters, stamp out shapes and arrange on the baking sheet.

Bake on the middle shelf of the preheated oven for around 12–15 minutes, until crisp and pale golden. Cool on the baking sheets, then package into pretty boxes or bags.

VARIATIONS

Pistachio Chocolate-dipped Shortbread
Add 75g of finely chopped unsalted, shelled pistachios to the shortbread mixture (chocolate or vanilla). Stamp out discs of shortbread and bake. Spread the baked and cooled shortbread discs with melted dark chocolate and scatter with chopped pistachios.

Stem Ginger Shortbread
Add 1 teaspoon of ground ginger and 1 finely chopped nugget of stem ginger to the basic vanilla mixture.

Lemon Shortbread
Add the finely grated zest of 1 unwaxed lemon, 1 teaspoon of lemon extract and 1 tablespoon of finely chopped candied lemon peel to the vanilla shortbread mixture in place of the vanilla extract.

Almond Shortbread
Add 75g of finely chopped or ground almonds to the chocolate or vanilla mixture.

Hazelnut Shortbread
Add 75g finely chopped or ground hazelnuts to the chocolate or vanilla mixture.

Morello Cherry Shortbread
Add chopped dried morello cherries to the vanilla or chocolate mixture.



CHRISTMAS

Date and Ginger Cake

Here's a light, gingery, fruit-filled Christmas cake that is cut into smaller cakes and then decorated to look like mini gifts. If you prefer you could simply cover the top of each small cake with a layer of marzipan and royal icing. Stamp out icing stars to decorate and embellish with silver sugar balls or edible glitter. To finish, tie each little cake in a festive ribbon and gift tag.

MAKES 1 X 23cm SQUARE OR 9 INDIVIDUAL CAKES

CAKE:

200g ready-to-eat stoned dates
4 knobs of stem ginger in syrup
175g sultanas
175g raisins
grated zest and juice of 1 un-waxed lemon
grated zest and juice of 1 orange
5 tablespoons ginger wine
250g plain flour
2½ teaspoons baking powder
3 teaspoons ground ginger
2 teaspoons mixed spice
75g ground almonds
250g unsalted butter, softened
125g light muscovado sugar
125g dark muscovado sugar
3 large eggs, beaten
3 tablespoons milk

Prepare the dry ingredients the day before you plan to bake the cake. Chop the dates into pieces roughly the same size as a sultana and finely chop the stem ginger. Mix the dates, stem ginger, sultanas and raisins in a large bowl with the grated lemon and orange zests and juices. Add the ginger wine, stir well, cover with clingfilm and set aside to soak and absorb the liquid overnight.

Preheat the oven to 150°C/300°F/gas mark 2 and position the shelf just below the middle of the oven. Butter a 23cm cake tin and line the base and sides with a double thickness of baking parchment.

Sift the flour, baking powder, ground ginger and mixed spice together on to a sheet of baking parchment and add the ground almonds.

In a large bowl or a free-standing mixer, cream the softened butter and both sugars together until light. Gradually add the beaten eggs, mixing well between additions. If the mixture appears curdled at any stage, add a tablespoon of the sifted flour mixture and continue to add the egg until it has all been incorporated.

Continued on next page



CHRISTMAS

Stollen

Stollen is a Christmas spiced bread originating from Germany that's loaded with dried fruits and filled with a thick layer of marzipan.

At this time of year with numerous gifts to think about, it makes perfect sense to double up on your baking especially as you'll never be short of worthy recipients.

MAKES 3 LOAVES

75g raisins
75g golden sultanas
25g currants
50g candied peel, finely chopped
50g natural glacé cherries, quartered
grated zest and juice of 2 clementines or 1 orange
2 tablespoons brandy
50g blanched almonds, roughly chopped
550g strong white bread flour, plus extra for rolling
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground mixed spice
seeds from 5 cardamom pods, ground
40g caster sugar
250ml milk
15g active dried yeast
100g unsalted butter, softened
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 large egg, beaten
450g marzipan
icing sugar, for dusting

Place the raisins, sultanas, currants, peel and cherries in a medium-sized bowl. Add the clementine or orange zest and juice and the brandy and leave to soak for an hour or so until the fruit has absorbed almost all of the liquid. Add the chopped almonds and mix well.

Sift the flour, salt, mixed spice, ground cardamom seeds and caster sugar into the bowl of a free-standing electric mixer fitted with a dough hook. Warm the milk, add the dried yeast and stir well. Set aside for 5–10 minutes, until the yeast has formed a thick foam on top of the milk, then add to the dry ingredients with the softened butter, vanilla and the beaten egg. Knead the dough in the mixer for about 5 minutes, until smooth. Add the soaked fruit and nuts and mix again until evenly distributed throughout the dough.

Turn the dough out on to a lightly floured work surface and shape into a ball. Place in a large, clean bowl, cover with clingfilm and leave in a warm, draught-free place for at least 1 hour, or until doubled in size.

Turn the dough out on to a lightly floured work surface again and knead lightly for 1 minute. Divide into three even pieces and roll each piece out to the size of a rectange, roughly 20 x 15cm. Divide the marzipan into 3 even pieces and roll each one into a log 15cm long. Place a marzipan log just off the middle of each piece of dough, brush the edges with a little milk, then fold the dough over the marzipan and press to seal.

Arrange the stollen on non-stick baking sheets, cover loosely with lightly oiled clingfilm and leave in a warm, draught-free place until doubled in size. Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4.

Bake the stollen, one at a time, on the middle shelf of the preheated oven for about 25 minutes, or until risen and golden brown. Cool on wire racks, then dust liberally with icing sugar before packaging into cellophane parcels tied with festive ribbon.

Stollen will keep for a week or so if wrapped well in foil or in a tin and is delicious warmed and sliced for breakfast.



Wedding Cake

Making a wedding cake for someone special is perhaps the ultimate food gift. I've lost count of the number of wedding cakes that I've made for friends and family, ranging from mountains of cupcakes to variations on this particular chocolate cake.

You will need to make this cake one layer at a time.

To make the smaller cake: preheat the oven to 170°C/325°F/gas mark 3 and line the base and sides of the 20cm square tin (7–8cm deep) with a double thickness of buttered baking parchment.

Break the chocolate into chunks and place in a medium-sized heatproof bowl. Add the diced butter and melt either over a pan of barely simmering water or in a microwave on a low setting. Stir until smooth, then remove from the heat and cool slightly.

Tip the egg yolks and caster sugar into the bowl of a free-standing electric mixer and whisk until pale and doubled in volume, scraping down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula from time to time. Add the cooled chocolate and butter mixture and the coffee extract and stir until smooth. Fold in the ground almonds and flour, using a large metal spoon.

In another large bowl whisk the egg whites with the salt until they hold stiff peaks. Stir one third of the egg whites into the chocolate mixture to loosen it slightly, then fold in the remainder using a large metal spoon. Carefully pour the mixture into the prepared tin, spread level and bake just below the middle of the preheated oven for 1 hour and 20 minutes, or until a wooden skewer inserted into the middle of the cake comes out clean. Remove from the oven and cool the cake in the tin.

Continued on next page

MAKES 1 CAKE
(SERVES ABOUT 50 GUESTS)

SMALLER CAKE:

300g dark chocolate
200g unsalted butter, diced
6 large eggs, separated
200g caster sugar
1 teaspoon coffee extract
150g ground almonds
1 rounded tablespoon plain flour
pinch of salt

LARGER CAKE:

600g dark chocolate
400g unsalted butter, diced
12 large eggs, separated
400g caster sugar
2 teaspoons coffee extract
300g ground almonds
2 rounded tablespoons plain flour
pinch of salt

TO FINISH:

8 tablespoons apricot jam
500g dark chocolate

CHOCOLATE GANACHE:

600g dark chocolate (72% cocoa solids)
250g unsalted butter, diced
6 tablespoons double cream

YOU WILL NEED:

1 x 20cm square cake tin
1 x 25cm square cake tin
1 x 20cm cake board
1 x 25cm cake board
dowels

