

In good company

Fill your table with a feast of flavours on boards and platters for a fun, connected dining experience with loved ones. Come for brunch, we say!

EDITED BY EMMA COXON PHOTOGRAPHS MOWIE KAY

Fifty years ago, in her essays on the pleasures of food, love and life, *The Art Of Eating*, celebrated American food writer MFK Fisher mused: 'With good friends and good food on the board... we may well ask, when shall we live, if not now?' We've missed coming together in recent months, but most of us can enjoy that life-affirming pleasure once more. Gathering over a smorgasbord of tasty, visually pleasing delights made with love, enjoying conversation and laughter in the comfort of home, there's nothing quite like it...

In Theo A Michaels' book *Share: Delicious Sharing boards For Social Dining* (Ryland, Peters & Small, £16.99), we are inspired to create a feast for the senses, presenting eye-catching boards laden with tempting dishes to encourage guests to interact with the food – and each other. Whether a relaxed brunch, which we've elevated to the meal of the moment, autumnal picnic or evening mezze platter, there is an array of tastes to savour. Michaels' board recipes are downsized and menus include plenty for vegans, pescatarians and meat eaters.

FRENCH TOAST WITH ALL THE TRIMMINGS

French toast is a staple brunch, even more enticing embellished with a few berries and lashings of maple syrup. Be quick before they're gone!

MAKES 4 SLICES

- 12 rashers smoked pancetta
- 4 just-ripe bananas
- Butter, for cooking
- 4 eggs
- 4 large slices thick-cut white bread
- Pure maple syrup, for drizzling
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Fresh berries, to serve
- Icing sugar, to dust (optional)

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C, gas mark 6.
2 Line a baking sheet with baking parchment. Arrange the strips of pancetta on top of the parchment, then lay a second sheet of parchment over the top. Pat it down to stick to the pancetta and pop into the preheated oven for 10 minutes, or until the pancetta is crispy. (Placing baking parchment on top helps keep the rashers flat.)
3 Peel the bananas and cut in half lengthways. Use bananas that are just ripe – if they are too soft, they

may break. Melt a knob of butter in a frying pan and lay the bananas in the pan cut-side down. Fry the bananas for a few minutes until golden and aromatic. Carefully turn them over using a fish slice and cook for a few minutes more, before removing them from the pan and setting aside.
4 Pour away any excess butter from the pan but don't wipe it.
5 Whisk the eggs in a wide-rimmed bowl and season lightly with salt and pepper. Working with one slice of bread at a time, dip it into the beaten eggs, letting it soak for a few seconds, then coat the other side of the bread before laying it into the hot pan to cook for a few minutes on each side. Repeat until all your bread is transformed into French toast.
6 Top each slice with crispy pancetta and a few slices of fried banana. Drizzle maple syrup over the top, letting it meander down the sides and add a few berries. Finish with a dusting of icing sugar, if you fancy it.





BLUEBERRY, COCONUT & CHIA SEED MINI ACAI BOWLS

Packed with immune-boosting goodness and texture, these bowls sing with chocolatey acai flavour.

MAKES 6 SMALL SERVINGS

- 3 small bananas
- 300g pure acai berry pulp
- 500g thick Greek yoghurt
- 3 tbsp toasted chia seeds
- 6 tbsp toasted coconut flakes
- Fresh blueberries and edible flowers, to garnish

1 Peel the bananas and mash the flesh with a fork, then whip it into a smooth pulp. Add the acai pulp and combine thoroughly.

2 Divide the yoghurt between six small serving bowls, then top each with a few tablespoons of the banana and acai mixture.

3 Top with generous sprinkles of toasted chia seeds and coconut flakes to finish. Add fresh blueberries to garnish, if you like, and serve.

ROSÉ-ROASTED RHUBARB & PISTACHIO YOGHURT POTS

Piquant rhubarb sets off creamy yoghurt – and pistachios complete a delectable trio for a lovely brunch.

MAKES 6 SMALL SERVINGS

- 400g forced rhubarb
- 90g caster sugar
- 12 cardamom pods, lightly cracked
- 125ml rosé wine
- ½ tsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 500g thick Greek yoghurt
- Crushed pistachio kernels and edible flowers, to garnish

1 Preheat the oven to 180°C, gas mark 4.

2 Cut the rhubarb into 2.5cm pieces and toss in a roasting pan with the sugar, cardamom pods, wine and lemon juice. Cover securely with foil, punctured with a few small holes.

3 Bake for 20 minutes, until tender. Once cooled, decant into a sterilised jar and leave in the fridge overnight.

4 When ready to assemble, divide the yoghurt between six glasses. Place a tablespoon of rhubarb (discard the cardamom pods) on top, plus another tablespoon of the liquid. Sprinkle over some pistachios, garnish with an edible flower and serve.



Psychologies readers can buy a copy of *Share: Delicious Sharing Boards For Social Dining* for the special price of £12 (RRP £16.99). To order, go to rylandpeters.com and use the code 'PSYCHSHARE'. Offer valid until 31 October 2020. P&P charges may apply.

SMOKED HADDOCK ON SOURDOUGH

An indulgent breakfast fish dish topped with a poached egg and a delicious faux hollandaise sauce.

MAKES 4 TOASTS

- 400g smoked, undyed haddock
- About 500ml full-fat milk
- 1 dried bay leaf
- 4 slices sourdough bread
- A generous pinch of dried chilli flakes
- 12 spears fresh asparagus
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 tbsp plain flour
- ½ tsp English mustard
- ½ tsp cider vinegar
- 4 eggs or 12 quail eggs
- Freshly chopped flat-leaf parsley, to garnish
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Olive oil, for brushing

1 Put the haddock in a snug-fitting saucepan and cover with the milk.

2 Add black pepper and the bay leaf. Poach on a low simmer for 5 minutes, until the flesh is opaque. Leave the fish in the milk until cool then remove. Set aside and reserve the milk.

3 Brush the bread with olive oil, season and sprinkle over the chilli. Oil the asparagus. Heat a griddle pan until hot. Add the bread and toast for 2 minutes on each side, warming the asparagus at the same time until lightly browned.

4 Set a small saucepan over a low heat. Add the butter and flour and heat for 2 minutes, then whisk in 125ml of the reserved milk. Simmer, whisking to a smooth sauce, adding more milk if needed. Add the mustard and vinegar, stir and season to taste, then set aside.

5 Poach the eggs in a pan of hot (not boiling) water for 5 minutes. Place the bread on a serving board with the fish and asparagus on top, add the eggs and pour over the hollandaise. Sprinkle over the parsley, season with pepper and serve.

