

February Recipe

Fish Pie for Little Pirates

Get your little pirates to help with this one - peeling eggs, mashing spuds, measuring and weighing. It's all good fun for tiny chefs and they'll think it tastes better if they made it themselves.

SERVES 8 SPROGS OR 4 GROWN-UPS

**FOR THE FILLING:**

300g (10 oz) smoked haddock fillet, skinless and boneless
300g (10 oz) cod fillet, skinless and boneless
1 bay leaf
450ml (16floz) milk or enough to just cover the fish
4 large eggs
4 handfuls frozen peas
1 tbsp butter
1 tbsp plain flour
1 handful flat leaf parsley, chopped
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE MASH:

4 largish Desiree potatoes, peeled and cubed
100g (3¼ oz) butter
1 small wine glass milk (about 150ml / 5fl oz)

Preheat the oven to 220°C (425°F/ Gas 7). Place the fish in your pie dish with the bay leaf and milk. Pop it in the oven. After 10 minutes, remove the fish from the oven and lift it out of the milk. Reserve the milk and bay leaf. Break up the fish into large chunks and set aside.

Put the eggs in a pan of water on a high heat, and bring it to a rolling boil. Allow the eggs to boil for 2 minutes, then add the peas and bring the pan back to the boil for a further 2 minutes. Strain the peas and eggs and run them under cold water. Put the fish and peas in the pie dish, then peel and quarter the eggs lengthways and add them to the dish as well.

Now melt the butter in a large saucepan on a lowish heat. Stir in the flour and let it sizzle for a couple of minutes, but don't let it brown. Whisk in the milk and bay leaf reserved from the fish. Let it gently bubble away for about 15 minutes, beating with a whisk from time to time. Stir in the parsley and season with salt. Allow the sauce to cool slightly, remove the bay leaf, then pour it over the fish mixture. Stir the sauce through carefully taking care that the eggs and fish don't break up.

To make the mash, boil the potatoes in plenty of salted water for about 15 minutes or until very tender when poked with a sharp knife. Drain well and mash them with the butter, milk and plenty of salt. I use a mouli (pictured on page 103), which makes a gorgeous lump-free mash. Cover the fish with the mash by spooning it on in large dollops all over the top. Fill in the holes by smoothing over the mash with the back of the spoon, then take a fork to rough the surface of the mash into small peaks. Place the pie in the oven and bake for 20 minutes or until golden on top.

I like to serve with buttered carrots and runner beans.