



From far left, baked meatballs with tahini sauce; mixed berry baked pancake; oat and zucchini pantry cookies.



For every season

Food writer and photographer NICOLA GALLOWAY's new book caters for those who love to cook according to the time of year.

Meatballs are an often-requested dinner in our house. Here, I share a baked version that is quite revolutionary, as there is no browning on the stovetop. Simply mix, roll and bake. Baking the meatballs in the oven works a treat, with the key being a high heat and adding the tomato once the meatballs have been sealed.

They are mildly spiced with Persian-inspired flavours and served with a creamy tahini sauce. If you don't have tahini on hand, serve without it or top with crumbled feta.

BAKED MEATBALLS WITH TAHINI SAUCE

500g premium beef or lamb mince
1 large carrot (about 150g), grated
handful of finely chopped coriander or parsley
1 free-range egg, beaten
½ cup (50g) small rolled oats or ½ cup breadcrumbs
1 tsp ground cumin

1 tsp ground coriander
1 tsp smoked paprika
pinch of chilli flakes
½ tsp salt
1 tbsp olive oil
1½ cups (375ml) tomato passata
or 400g can chopped tomatoes
TAHINI SAUCE
3 tbsp tahini
juice of ½ lemon (1-2 tbsp)
about ½ cup water
1 small garlic clove, finely chopped (optional)
3 tbsp chopped parsley
pinch of salt

Preheat the oven to 210°C.

In a bowl, combine the mince, carrot, herbs, egg, oats or breadcrumbs, spices and salt. Use your hands or a spoon to thoroughly

combine. Check the seasoning by making a small patty and cooking it in a lightly oiled hot pan until brown on both sides. Taste, then adjust the mixture with extra salt if needed.

Roll the meatball mixture into walnut-sized balls. Arrange in an oven dish in a single layer with a little space between each – I use a 30cm cast-iron frying pan.

Drizzle the meatballs with the oil, then place the dish in the oven. Bake for 15 minutes or until the meatballs are sealed – there will be some cooking liquid in the base of the pan at this stage. Pour over the passata or chopped tomatoes, then return to the oven for 15-20 minutes until the meatballs are cooked through and the sauce has thickened.

While the meatballs are cooking,

make the tahini sauce. Combine the ingredients in a bowl and mix well, adding an extra splash of water if required to loosen. Check the taste, and adjust with extra lemon juice or salt if needed.

Serve the hot meatballs with the tahini sauce on the side, accompanied by cooked quinoa or flatbreads to soak up the sauce, and a crisp salad or broccoli.

Serves 4.

IN LATE WINTER, I find myself dreaming of summer berries, and thank my thoughtful self for the berries picked and frozen in the warmer months. In essence, freezing fresh produce is the simplest form of home preserving (if you have the freezer space, that is). A selection of frozen berries on hand can bring a burst of flavour to any out-of-season baking.

This baked pancake (aka Dutch baby) is fun to make for a simple weekend breakfast, and is also easy to make on a weekday morning. It is basically a thin pancake batter poured into a hot pan, topped with berries and baked in the oven. This is an occasion where I do recommend

using the fan function, if you have the option, to retain oven heat when opening the oven door to add the batter and berries. The result is a light and puffy baked pancake that is served as hot wedges rather than individual pancakes.

MIXED BERRY BAKED PANCAKE

3 free-range eggs
2 tbsp maple syrup or sugar
1 cup (150g) plain white flour – wheat, spelt, or gluten-free flour mix
1 tsp baking powder
pinch of salt
200ml milk
30g (2 tbsp) butter
1 cup (about 120g) frozen blueberries and/or blackberries
TO SERVE
maple syrup
natural unsweetened yogurt

Preheat the oven to fan 200°C (non-fan 220°C).

Place a heavy-based frying pan (such as a cast-iron skillet) with a heatproof handle in the oven to preheat. If you haven't got a heatproof pan, use a shallow 25cm square or round baking dish or cake tin.

In a bowl, whisk the eggs and maple syrup or sugar. Sift over the flour, baking powder and salt, then stir to combine. Gradually add the milk, stirring between each addition, until a thin batter forms – but don't overmix. Rest the batter while the oven heats.

Once the oven is hot, open the door and add the butter to the pan. Wait 2 minutes, then open the door again and quickly pour the batter into the pan, then scatter over the berries. Work quickly so the door isn't open too long.

Cook for 15 minutes, then check if the pancake is baked through, giving it another 2-3 minutes if needed.

Serve immediately, cut into wedges, with maple syrup and yogurt.

Serves 3-4.

THESE COOKIES ARE seriously good. When I asked my website readers for some of their favourite recipes to include in my book, this was at the top of the list. So, when you have zucchini coming out your ears in deep summer, make these – you won't be sorry. One tip: pay special attention to squeezing out the excess

zucchini liquid thoroughly before adding to the mix.

These cookies utilise pantry staples such as rolled oats, coconut and seeds. And they are super-adaptable: any flour can be used; if you don't have pumpkin seeds, use sunflower seeds; coconut could be swapped for ground almonds; sultanas can be replaced with chopped chocolate. You get the picture.

OAT AND ZUCCHINI PANTRY COOKIES

½ cup (about 70g) grated zucchini (see notes below)
pinch of salt
80g butter, softened
1 tbsp olive oil
½ cup (65g) sugar
1 small free-range egg
½ cup (75g) plain white or wholemeal flour – wheat, spelt or gluten-free
½ cup (50g) small rolled oats
½ cup (40g) desiccated coconut or ground almonds
½ cup (40g) pumpkin seeds or sunflower seeds
½ cup (50g) sultanas or raisins
1 tsp ground ginger
1 tsp baking powder

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line a cookie tray with baking paper.

First, grate the zucchini, aiming for shorter pieces by holding the zucchini horizontal rather than on an angle. Place the grated zucchini into a square of cheese cloth or a clean cloth napkin. Add a pinch of salt to help draw out the moisture, then twist and squeeze firmly to press out the excess liquid. Repeat until no more drips come out of the cloth. Set aside.

Place the butter, oil, sugar and egg in a bowl and use a fork to combine – it is fine if it's lumpy. Mix through the zucchini, then add the remaining ingredients and use the fork to bring together into a stiff dough.

Roll the dough into walnut-sized balls – if the dough is soft, place it in the fridge for 20-30 minutes to firm up first. Arrange the balls on the cookie tray with 2-3cm space between each, then gently press to flatten a little.

Bake for 15 minutes or until the cookies are golden and firm to touch. Transfer to a cooling rack. Store in an airtight container in the pantry and eat within 5 days.

Makes 16 small or 12 large cookies.

VARIATION: DOUBLE CHOC COOKIES

Use chopped chocolate in place of the sultanas and replace 3 tbsp of the flour with cocoa powder. ■

Extracted from **THE HOMEMADE TABLE**, by Nicola Galloway (Potton & Burton, \$59.99)

