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HOW TO BEAT THE BACK-TO-SCHOOL BLUES



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SPOTLIGHT

**A COMPOSER
INSPIRED BY QATAR**

➤ GOURMET: LITTLE BITES

➤ TOP GEAR: JAGUAR F-PACE

➤ GLAM AND GLITZ IN GENEVA

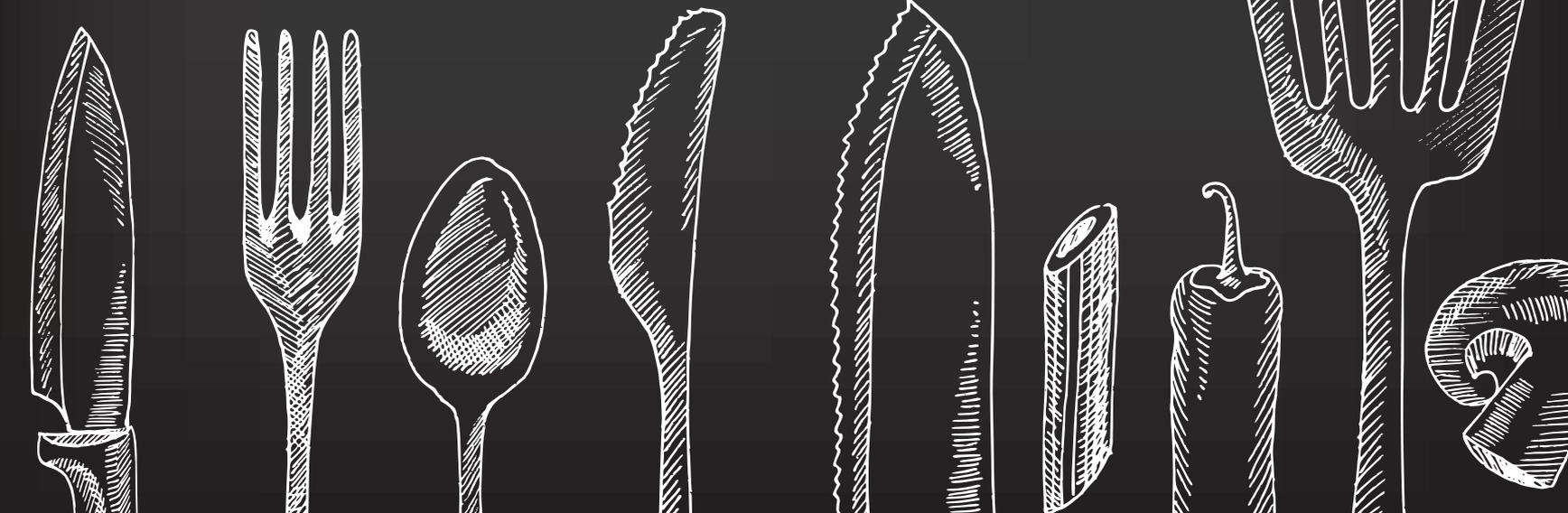


little bites

Nothing feels better than watching your child polish off a healthy, home-cooked meal. Carolyn Robb, former personal chef to TRH Prince Charles and the late Princess Diana for over a decade, shares some sneaky ideas for giving kids the foods they love



Carolyn Robb, co-founder of The Royal Touch, was formerly Executive Chef to TRH Prince Charles and the late Princess Diana for over a decade and also served other members of the Royal Family. Carolyn's cookbook *The Royal Touch* is a beautiful compilation of stunning recipes gathered from far and wide on an incredible culinary journey. Inspired by everything from her mother's home-cooking, memories of her happy childhood in South Africa and her extensive travels to the extraordinary experiences of 13 years as a chef in the royal household, Carolyn's recipes are simple to prepare and perfect to share.



MINI TRADITIONAL ENGLISH BREAKFAST

As a child I loved anything in miniature, which is why I have taken a full English breakfast and shrunk it. This microscopic 'fry-up' will tempt any small person. It is the perfect way to set young adventurers up for a secret mission in the woods, a long day of messing around on bikes or an assignment in the snow!

Ingredients:

YOU WILL NEED:

- ☐ A small, preferably non-stick, frying pan
- ☐ 4 - 8 good quality small breakfast sausages
- ☐ A little mild olive oil
- ☐ 6 rashers of smoked streaky bacon
- ☐ 4 mini plum tomatoes
- ☐ A pinch of caster sugar
- ☐ A pinch of fine sea salt
- ☐ 2 quails' eggs or small eggs
- ☐ 1 mini brioche loaf or baguette
- ☐ A knob / 2 Tbsp of butter
- ☐ Parsley to garnish

Method:

Serves 2 (but these quantities can be modified to suit the size of the appetite and the child)

1. Prick the sausages and cook them in a frying pan with a little oil until they are nicely coloured and crispy on the outside, approximately 10 minutes. Keep warm.
2. Roll up each rasher of bacon and secure with a cocktail stick. Cook in a frying pan until crispy. Keep warm.
3. Prick each tomato a few times, roll in a little olive oil and sprinkle with a pinch of salt and caster sugar. You can cook these in the pan with the bacon, until they are soft. Keep warm.
4. Fry the quails' eggs in a little butter. Slice the brioche and toast it.
5. Serve on a warm plate. Put the egg on a piece of the toasted brioche and arrange the sausages, bacon rolls (remove cocktail sticks) and tomatoes around it. Garnish with a tiny piece of parsley.

TOMATO SOUP WITH CHEESY TEDDY BEAR CROUTONS

Children love dunking the little teddy croutons into their soup, making patterns with the Greek Yogurt as they stir it in and also having their own tiny bowl of grated cheese to sprinkle on top. If you have alphabet cutters you can have fun spelling the child's name or writing 'eat me' in tiny cut-outs of buttered toast. A bowl of healthy soup goes down even more readily with a little distraction!

Ingredients

- ❑ 1 onion
- ❑ ½ leek
- ❑ 1 carrot
- ❑ 30ml / 2 Tbsp mild olive oil
- ❑ 800g / 1lb 12oz tin of plum tomatoes
- ❑ 2 sprigs of fresh thyme
- ❑ Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ❑ 10ml / 2 tsp brown sugar

FOR THE CROUTONS:

- 6 slices wholemeal bread
- A little butter
- 30g / 1oz grated Cheddar cheese (4 Tbsp)

TO SERVE:

- 60ml / 6 dessert spoons Greek yogurt (¼ cup)
- 85g / 3oz grated cheddar cheese (¾ cup)
- 6 sprigs of Greek basil, with tiny leaves

Method

Makes 6 children's portions

1. Wash the vegetables, finely chop the onion and leek and grate the carrot.
2. Warm the olive oil in a heavy-based pan, add the vegetables. Cook with the lid on for 5-10 minutes until they are soft, but do not allow them to colour.
3. Add the tomatoes and thyme, and season with salt, pepper and sugar. Bring to a gentle simmer. Cook with the lid on for a further 30 minutes, stirring every so often.
4. Leave to cool a little, remove the sprigs of thyme and then blend half the soup to a smooth creamy consistency using a stick blender or liquidiser. Return the blended soup to the pan and mix well. Some children prefer a smooth soup with 'no bits' in it, in which case you can blend all of it.
5. To make the croutons: Preheat the oven to 180°C / 350°F. Butter the bread on both sides. Using a teddy shaped cutter, cut out 3 or 4 croutons for each child.
6. Sprinkle them with the grated cheese, place on a baking tray and bake for 10-12 minutes, until they are crisp and golden.
7. Serve the soup into warm bowls, top each one with a dessert spoon of Greek yogurt and a sprig of basil. Serve with tiny individual bowls of finely grated cheddar cheese and the teddy croutons.



ORZO WITH PESTO AND PARMESAN CRISPS

This is a super quick supper to throw together, especially if you already have some home-made pesto in the refrigerator. From no age at all, my girls have loved stripping the basil leaves from their stems to make pesto. They have grown to love the smell of the basil on their hands and I believe that learning to appreciate all aspects of food - tastes, textures, colours and smells - is the very best way of encouraging children to be adventurous with their food, both preparing and eating it. You will not need all of the pesto in this recipe for this dish, but it is not practical to make a smaller quantity in a food processor. You can store the remainder in the refrigerator for up to a week.

Ingredients

YOU WILL NEED:

A medium baking tray, either non-stick or lined with a silicon mat or baking parchment.

FOR THE PESTO:

- ☐ 30g / 1oz pine nuts (¼ cup)
- ☐ 55g / 2oz parmesan, grated (½ cup)
- ☐ 1 small clove of garlic
- ☐ 55g / 1oz basil leaves (¾ cup packed)
- ☐ 75ml / 5 Tbsp virgin olive oil
- ☐ Freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE PARMESAN CRISPS:

55g / 2oz parmesan cheese, grated (½ cup)

TO SERVE:

- 85g / 3oz orzo (½ cup)
- 60ml / 4 Tbsp crème fraîche

Method

Serves 2

1. To make the pesto: Toast the pine nuts lightly in a frying pan. Transfer them to a food processor or blender and process them, with the parmesan and garlic, to a smooth consistency.
2. Add the basil, olive oil and a few twists of black pepper. Process again to blend all the ingredients together.
3. Store in a glass jar, with a layer of olive oil on the top to prevent discolouration. Keep in the fridge for up to a week.
4. Preheat the oven to 180°C / 350°F.
5. To make the parmesan crisps: Place 6 small heaps of the grated parmesan onto the baking tray or silicon mat. Spread each one out to a circle with a diameter of approximately 8cm (3¼ inches). Try not to leave any holes or gaps in the circles of parmesan, or the crisps are more likely to break when they are cooked.
6. Bake for 10-12 minutes, until all the cheese has melted and they are starting to colour slightly.
7. Leave to cool on the baking sheet for a minute before carefully removing them with a palette knife or spatula and draping them over a rolling pin to shape them as they harden. These are best eaten on the day that they are made, as they quickly lose their crispness and become chewy.
8. To serve, cook the orzo for 10 minutes (or as directed on the packet) and drain through a sieve.
9. Warm the crème fraîche in the same saucepan. Add the drained orzo back into the pan and stir to combine, then stir in 6 tablespoons of pesto.
10. Spoon into warmed bowls and serve immediately.
11. Finish with a parmesan crisp and tiny sprig of basil. Serve extra parmesan crisps on the side.

LITTLE SAUSAGE MAN AND MASH

Children seldom need encouragement to tuck into sausages and mash; even so, I love to surprise them with this little chap. He has brought smiles to many little faces over the years. He is perfect for any nursery menu, but he has also been known to venture out on picnics, as a cold sausage man! He is very easy to make, but you should be on hand to remove the cocktail sticks that hold him together.

Ingredients

YOU WILL NEED:

6 cocktail sticks or toothpicks

FOR THE SAUSAGE MEN:

- ☐ 10 chicken cocktail sausages
- ☐ A little light olive oil
- ☐ 2 cherry tomatoes
- ☐ 2 button mushrooms or the ends of a
- ☐ cucumber (for hats)
- ☐ 6 small pieces of broccoli

FOR THE MASH:

- ☐ 340g / 12oz floury potatoes
- ☐ (1 medium russet potato)
- ☐ 75ml / 5 Tbsp milk
- ☐ 30g / 2 Tbsp butter
- ☐ Salt, pepper and nutmeg



Method

Makes 2 little men, serves 2

1. Heat a little olive oil in a non-stick frying pan. Prick the sausages and cook them for about 10 minutes, until they are nicely browned and crispy. Once cooked, keep warm.
2. While the sausages are cooking, peel and dice the potatoes, and cook them in boiling, salted water until they are soft. Drain thoroughly.
3. Place the milk and butter in the saucepan in which the potatoes were cooked and bring to the boil. Add the potatoes and cook for a minute.
4. Using a fork or potato masher, mash to a very smooth purée and season lightly. I believe that it is important to season children's food carefully and not to serve food that is bland. I use salt sparingly and also a little freshly ground black pepper and finely grated nutmeg, which will lend a very subtle flavour to the potato.
5. Lightly cook the broccoli in salted, boiling water.
6. To assemble the sausage men, you will need one sausage as a body to which you attach two sausages to one end for legs and two sausages at the other end for arms, using the cocktail sticks.
7. For the head, use a tomato, onto which you can secure either a mushroom hat or a cucumber hat. Use another cocktail stick to attach the head and hat to the body.
8. To serve, put a mound of mashed potato onto a warmed plate and either sit or lay the sausage man on it, or you can stand him by propping him up against a high stack of mash. Decorate with 3 pieces of broccoli and serve immediately.
9. I usually accompany him with a tiny bowl of organic tomato ketchup ●