



SCIENCE CUISINE



State of the Art Festive Food

Pioneering British chef de cuisine Heston Blumenthal – who exclusively serves Nespresso at his restaurant – gives readers of the N Magazine a tantalising twist to their established good taste. An exclusive menu for the festive season to celebrate his award-winning sensible science of flavour in your own kitchen.

Eight or nine years ago, when Blumenthal had just opened his restaurant, The Fat Duck in the village of Bray-on-Thames, a gourmet-heaven just 40 minutes from London, he found out the hard way what can go wrong when cooking for a dinner party... A table for 10 people was booked at The Fat Duck to celebrate the host's 40th birthday. His wife took pains to call every other week over a period of three months to talk through the menu, which included a special chocolate cake but without the usual ingredients of coffee or nuts. Seeing how worried the anxious wife was about it, Heston Blumenthal also began to get a bit nervous. The fateful day dawned and at 7 p.m. the guests arrived. The chef went into the kitchen to get something out of the fridge, on top of which sat the special chocolate cake. The moment he closed the door again and looked up at the cake, it started to slide off the top of the fridge – proceeding to bounce off the top of his head and land face down on the floor with a loud splat! He stood there staring at the mess in utter disbelief while the eager party of 10 sat at their restaurant table in blissful ignorance of the catastrophe. The unconventional chef took a very unconventional step in the pretty competitive world of cuisine: he called the other famous cook in the same village, the French master chef Michel Roux at the nearby Waterside Inn. On a very off chance, he asked whether Roux might have a chocolate cake – without any coffee or nuts. He did. Heaving a huge sigh of relief, Blumenthal immediately sent someone to pick it up. To this day, he's never told this story to anyone, including those guests. Since those rather fretful early days, he has gone on to become one of Britain's most revered chefs. Both highly creative and highly scientific, his innovative culinary delights have positioned his restaurant The Fat Duck as the producer of some of the most revolutionary cuisine on the island – recently being declared "the best restaurant in the world" *. Garnering his third Michelin star – the highest possible rating – in 2005, he is now on a par with his 'saviour', Michel Roux, who is well into his 20th consecutive year of three star awards.

*'50 Best Restaurants in the World' as voted by 600 respected chefs, restaurateurs, critics and gourmands from around the world and organised annually by Restaurant Magazine.





Slow Cooked Pork Belly with Truffle Macaroni, Pork Rilette & Cabbage

Pork belly

3kg Pork belly (off the bone)
Brine (recipe below)

Submerge the pork belly in the brine for 24 hours. Remove and rinse with cold running water for 4 hours. Sous vide the belly with 500ml of water, place this inside another bag and seal once more. Place the belly in a water bath set at 60°C for 36 hours. Check the water temperature with a probe on a regular basis to make sure it remains constant. After 36 hours, remove the belly and cool over ice rapidly (the temperature needs to be below 5°C). Remove the belly from the bag and cut into portions. Cut the outer layer of skin from the belly, leaving a thin layer of fat covering the meat. Sous vide the portions in separate bags and seal tightly.

Brine

3 litres Water
150g Table salt
500g Sel rose
Half a head of garlic
Zest of 1 orange & 1 lemon
3 Star anise
75g Coriander seeds (blitzed) wrapped in muslin
1 Sprig of rosemary
1 Cinnamon stick
9 Cloves
1 Small bunch thyme
4 Bay leaves
7 Juniper berries
10 Allspice

Blitz the coriander and wrap in muslin. Place all the remaining ingredients in a stock pot and bring to the boil. Remove from the heat and cool.

Truffle Macaroni

200ml Double cream
100ml Truffle juice
150ml Brown chicken stock
100g Macaroni
10g Salt
1 litre boiling water

Reduce the stock, truffle juice and cream in separate pans. Mix together and season. In another pan add the salt to the water and bring to boil. Cook the pasta 3/4 of the way, then drain and cut into 1cm pieces. Add the pasta to the sauce and return to the heat. Cook until the sauce begins to thicken. Season and add white truffle oil to taste.

Pork sauce

1kg Diced pork shoulder
1kg Reserved pork bones from the salted pork racks
500g Onions finely sliced
500g Carrots finely sliced
1 small bunch thyme
2 bay leaves
200ml Brown chicken stock
75g Butter
125ml Olive oil

Chop the pork bones into smaller pieces and soak under running water for 1 hr. In a large black tray, brown the pork bones in butter and olive oil until golden, then add the diced pork and cook for ten minutes. Remove the pork into a pot, leaving the fat behind. Add the carrots and cook until soft and starting to brown, then add the onions and repeat the cooking. Place the carrots and onions in the pot, deglaze the pan with 400ml of water and reduce. Repeat this a further four times and then add to the pot. Cover the bones with water or white chicken stock if you can spare it. Bring to the boil and skim off any scum. Add the thyme and bay, simmer for 1 1/2 hrs and then leave to stand for 1 hr. Pass through a double layer of muslin and reduce skimming frequently. Add the brown chicken stock and continue to reduce until the desired consistency. Taste and adjust the seasoning and add a few knobs of butter. Finally, infuse the sauce with 4 bruised sage leaves for 5 minutes.

Cabbage with Pork rilette.

200g Pointed cabbage (prepared weight)
100g Pork rilette
80g Butter

Discard the outer leaves from the cabbage and the cut into 1cm strips. Place the cabbage and butter in a saucepan and cover with a lid. Cook over medium heat until the cabbage is almost cooked. Stir in the pork rilette and season with salt and black pepper. Drain excess fat on kitchen paper before serving.

To serve: Reheat the pork belly in a water bath set at 60°C, until it reaches an internal temperature of 60°C. Then in a hot pan colour the fat side until lightly golden. Remove from the pan and glaze the coloured side with pork roasting juices. Season with fleur de sel and freshly ground black pepper.

Roast Foie Gras with Almond, Cherry & Camomile

Almond fluid gel

800g Skimmed milk
300g Roast almonds
3 Bay leaves
30 Drops almond essence
18g Sugar
7.5g Salt
5g Gellan gum

Heat all ingredients except the gellan gum and roughly blend with the hand blender. Leave to infuse for 10 minutes. Pass through a fine mesh sieve, discarding the almond, and then return to the boil. Using a hand blender, blitz in the gellan gum until dissolved and remove from heat. Place in fridge and blend repeatedly whilst cooling until smooth.

Cherry purée

500g Fresh cherries
200g Dried Morello cherries
Seeds from the cherries crushed in muslin

Blend the fresh and dried cherries in a food processor until smooth. Pass through a fine chinois. Place the crushed seeds inside the muslin sack and leave in the purée to infuse. Flame griottine cherries and add to the sauce (these will be needed when assembling the dish).

Amaretto jelly

150ml Amaretto
30g Water
8g Powdered gelatine

Bring the Amaretto to the boil and flame. Remove from heat and allow to cool. In a small pan heat the water and gelatine, stirring constantly until dissolved. Remove from heat and stir in the cooled Amaretto before passing through a fine chinois and setting in the fridge. Cut into 4mm squares.

To cook the Foie Gras

1 slice of Rougié Foie Gras per person
Chives (finally chopped)
Cracked white and black pepper
Fleur de sel
8-year-old balsamic vinegar
Ground camomile flowers

Sous vide a slice of rougie Foie Gras and poach in a water bath set at 60°C for 40 minutes. Remove from the water bath and take out of the bag. Place on a tray and colour both sides of the Foie Gras using a blow torch. Top with finely chopped chives, cracked white and black pepper and fleur de sel, then drizzle with the balsamic vinegar. Drain on kitchen paper and sprinkle with ground camomile flowers.

To serve: On one side of the plate place a dessertspoon of warm almond fluid gel and 1 griottine cherry. In the middle of the plate draw 2 parallel lines of cherry puree. On either end of one of the lines of puree place 1 half of green fresh almonds. On the outside of the other line of puree place 3 squares of Amaretto jelly. In the middle of the 2 lines place the Foie Gras.





A cup of Nespresso served with Carrot Lolly and Beetroot Jelly

Carrot Lolly
 100g Carrot juice
 10g Icing sugar
 10g Maltodextrin
 1g Gellan gum
 Orange zest as needed

Pre heat the oven to 100°C. Blend all the above ingredients and bring to the boil, continue to boil for 2 minutes. Pour into a container and cool over ice rapidly. Once this mixture has cooled it will have a hard consistency, which is then blended into a smooth paste. Cut out of cardboard an oblong template 2cm x 3cm. Line a baking sheet with a non-stick mat. Using the template, spread the mix over the sheet. Sprinkle some grated orange zest over the lollies. Place a toothpick or lolly stick into the mix half way up the tuile and half sticking out of the mix. Bake in the preheated oven for 2.5 hours.

Beetroot Jelly
 Beetroot juice
 25kg Beetroot

Peel and chop beetroots. Half fill a blender bowl with chopped beetroot and add 150–200ml of water. Blitz until smooth and pass through a chinois until you reach the 4.4 litre mark.

Beetroot Jellies
 4.4 litres Beetroot juice
 28g Pectin
 100g White castor sugar
 227g Glucose
 1kg Castor sugar (Billingtons)
 40g Tartaric acid (mixed with a touch of water)

Mincemeat Toffee

90g Double cream
 Half a stick of cinnamon
 The seeds of 1 stick of vanilla
 1 Star anise
 0.5 g Grated nutmeg
 1 Clove
 Zest of 1 orange
 30g Mincemeat
 75g Glucose
 75g Castor sugar
 60g Unsalted butter
 75g Whole milk
 4g Salt

Place the double cream, cinnamon, vanilla, star anise, grated nutmeg, clove and orange zest in a pan and boil. Leave to infuse for half an hour. Heat the sugar, glucose, butter, milk and salt, continually stirring until it reaches 145°C. Remove from the heat and strain. Add this gradually to the cream mixture. Leave to set. Once set, fold in the mincemeat and portion into desired amount.

*At The Fat Duck restaurant this is served with butternut ice cream, candied carrot and carrot chip, but it is delicious on its own or served with vanilla ice cream.

You will need a tray measuring 325mm x 530mm x 60mm deep, lined with greaseproof paper. Put beetroot juice in a pan on the stove. Mix together thoroughly the white caster sugar and the pectin. Add this mix whilst continuously whisking the beetroot juice. Then add the other sugar and glucose. Cook until temperature reaches 108°C exactly (if it is less than this it won't set, and if it is any higher it will set like a brick!) When it reaches 108°C add the tartaric acid whilst still whisking. Pour into your pre-lined tray.



Tips for Festive Food at Home

Heston Blumenthal gives good advice on cooking for large dinner parties.

■ **One of the key things** for any larger dinner party is organisation – so make sure that when you're serving the food in the evening most of the work has already been done!

■ **If you are cooking meat**, choose a big piece of meat, like a saddle of venison, which you can then cook very slowly in a low-temperature oven ... What you don't want is a situation where you've only got a five-minute gap between serving a glass of champagne and having to get a complicated main course together. Choose a dish that only needs very little last-minute preparation.

■ **A casserole stew would be good** – you can cook it slowly for hours and then just turn the oven down to 60 or 70°C to keep it warm for serving. If you've got a leg of lamb or venison then you can simply blanch the vegetables, add butter and herbs and keep them nicely warm and ready to serve.

■ **Don't try and do too much:** It's more impressive to do one thing really well rather than trying to do 15 or 20 courses, because the quality is bound to suffer. Think simple and good: two courses, perhaps, and then finish off with one beautiful whole cheese – like a Mont d'Or (or Vacherin du Haut-Doubs) from France, which is only available from Mid-August until the end of March. Serve it in its box with a spoon and chunks of bread.

■ **I'd prefer one main dish** that sits on the table as a centre-piece, rather than a buffet style dinner. Obviously the food is important, but the main point of a social gathering should be the interaction of people. So an open-plan kitchen where you can cook on the one side and interact with guests on the other is good.

■ **You should** remember the simple, obvious rule of taking time to plan the preparation really properly. That way, you know that the things that take the longest have to be put on first. It's amazing how many people don't do this – they simply read each line of the recipe and do as it says, without working out which step it would make more sense to do beforehand. Do this, and life will be a lot easier.

■ **A good tip** is also to use your ears when cooking. If you want to clarify butter until it starts smelling of hazelnuts and then strain the bits off to use, well, put it on the heat and listen for it while you do something else. Then, when you can no longer hear it sizzling, you know it's ready because this means all the water's gone and it's going to start burning. Start remembering what food sounds like at different stages of cooking – a useful tool in the kitchen.



■ **In deciding what to cook**, consider whether there's a local farm or a supplier near you whom you trust and know delivers fantastic quality; then buy your larger quantities of meat or poultry there. However, this also means choosing what's on offer. Meeting your guests' special dietary requirements is also important, so check that out beforehand. Using what's in season locally at the time, and not going for imported or exotic stuff, is a good decision-aid.

■ **Don't try and be adventurous** with the actual dish, though. If you're cooking something for the first time, there's a danger of you just being really miserable if it goes wrong! If you want to experiment a bit, that's fine – just make sure you've got some other things to fall back on!

■ **In terms of larger quantities** of soup or browning cuts of meat, just remember: If you're used to browning four lots of oxtail in one pan then don't just chuck all 16 pieces into one pan as well! It'll only stew, sweat and won't get brown at all! You have to split them up into separate batches, which will take longer, but have the desired effect. Some soups with green vegetables need to be cooked quickly to preserve colour and flavour – so you need to slice vegetables as thinly as possible. It also makes sense to cook large quantities in separate pots rather than in one big one, which will definitely take longer to heat up at all.