

Gill's Gourmet Gallery

Seasonal nut loaf

Ingredients:

200g red split lentils, soaked overnight and rinsed
450ml vegetable stock
1 bay leaf
100g cooked chestnuts
1½ tbsp olive oil
1 large onion, finely chopped
1 large or 2 small leeks, trimmed and finely chopped
1 red pepper, deseeded and chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 tbsp lemon juice
100g mature Cheddar cheese, grated
100g wholemeal breadcrumbs
2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
1 egg, lightly beaten

Method:

If using fresh chestnuts in a shell, slit the shell with a sharp knife. Place in a pan of cold water and boil for 20 minutes. Once the nuts are cooked, drain and leave them to cool. Chop them in half. Remove the nut with a teaspoon. Discarding the shell and pith. Rinse the lentils in a sieve under cold running water. Drain and then tip into a saucepan. Add the stock and bay leaf and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to a gentle simmer, then cover and cook for 15 minutes until the lentils are soft and the stock has been absorbed. Discard the bay leaf. Preheat the oven to 190°C/gas 5. Line the bottom of a 1.4 litre loaf tin with a piece of greaseproof paper. Add the oil to the frying pan and cook the onion over a moderate heat for 5 minutes. Add the leeks, red pepper, and garlic to the pan and cook for a further 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until tender. Stir in the lemon juice.

Tip the lentils and vegetables into a mixing bowl. Stir in the breadcrumbs, chestnuts and 2 tbsp of parsley, followed by the grated cheese and beaten egg. Season to taste, then spoon into the loaf tin. Level the top and cover with a piece of lightly oiled foil. Bake the loaf for 30 minutes, then remove the foil and bake for a further 30 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Remove from the oven and leave to cool and set in the tin for 10 minutes before turning out and cutting into thick slices. Tasty served with a mushroom or tomato sauce.

