

Comfort Food

Get set for winter dining with these gorgeous recipes from the Ard Bia Cookbook, one of Galway's foodie havens. The book concentrates on local ingredients but with a special twist.

Galway sourced artisan products are paired with new Middle Eastern flavours to create a family friendly go to manual for all your kitchen needs.

Written by **Aoibheann Mac Namara**, a regular contributor to GALWAYnow with food journalist **Aoife Carrigy**, the book features not only the recipes of Ard Bia but also the suppliers who are named throughout, many of whom are local.

Autumnal Squash Soup

This warming soup is a favourite when the days are getting shorter, the evenings crisper and summer has finally slipped into autumn. Butternut squash and pumpkin are the most readily available, but farmers' market stalls often have interesting varieties of squash, each with their own unique flavour.

INGREDIENTS

3–4 tbsp olive oil
2 onions, diced
5 garlic cloves, bashed with the flat of a knife and peeled
2 tsp cumin seeds
1 thumb-sized piece of fresh ginger, peeled and finely chopped salt and pepper, to taste
1 carrot, peeled and roughly diced
2 sticks celery, roughly chopped
1 pinch of cayenne pepper (optional)
1.2kg / 2.6lbs squash of choice, peeled and de-seeded (butternut squash or pumpkin are the most common)
1 litre / 2 pints vegetable stock

Tastes great with 1 handful toasted pumpkin seeds or 3–4 handfuls fresh coriander (optional)

METHOD

Heat a large heavy-based pot over a medium heat and add the olive oil, diced onion, bashed garlic, cumin seeds, ginger, salt and pepper, carrot and celery along with the cayenne pepper, if using. Sweat over a low to medium heat until the onion and vegetables soften a little and the cumin seeds are toasted. When you think you have enough flavour in your pot – the change in colour is a clue but you'll know by the delicious aromas – add your chosen member of the squash family. Barely cover with stock, cover with a lid and allow to simmer until the squash is cooked, about 20–25 minutes, although it will depend on what type of squash you use, so check by piercing with a knife. Allow to cool a little before blending. Add a little water if the soup needs thinning. Check the seasoning for taste and serve garnished with toasted pumpkin seeds or fresh coriander.

Tip: Bashing a clove of garlic, instead of finely chopping or crushing it, will coax out sweeter, milder flavours rather than a more fiery heat. **Don't worry about leaving them whole, as you'll be blending the soup.**

FOOD

Winterberry and Ginger Pudding with Homemade Custard

Welcome the onset of winter with this pudding, which combines the last of autumn's fruit off the brambles with ginger heat and buttery caramel flavours. You could pick a glut of blackberries and freeze in batches to use through the darker days of winter – just thaw gently in the fridge overnight. *Makes 8*

INGREDIENTS

200g / 8oz soft butter
200g / 8oz caster sugar
4 eggs
200g / 8oz self-raising flour
2 lemons, zest only
1 thumb-sized piece of fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated
1 pinch salt
8 tbsp golden syrup
200g / 8oz blackberries
For the custard:
¼ vanilla pod
125g / 4fl oz milk
125g / 4fl oz cream
3 egg yolks
60g / 2oz sugar

METHOD

Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4. Rub individual dariole moulds with a little butter to prevent sticking. Cream the butter and sugar together until smooth and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, beating each one well into the mixture. Sift flour and fold in gently. Add lemon zest, ginger and salt and mix through.

In the bottom of each mould put one tablespoon of golden syrup with three to four blackberries. Spoon the mixture on top, filling each one just over halfway. Cover with tin foil and bake in a preheated oven for 20–25 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the custard. Scrape the seeds from the vanilla pod and add the seeds and pod to the milk and cream in a saucepan. Bring to the boil, remove from the

heat and set aside for 10 minutes to infuse. In a metal or glass bowl whisk together the egg yolks and sugar until the sugar is fully dissolved. Place the bowl over a pot of simmering water, ensuring that the water isn't touching the bottom of the bowl.

Pour in the vanilla cream, stirring to gently cook until the mixture thickens sufficiently to coat the back of a spoon. Test a pudding with a small knife, which should come out clean. To serve, turn out the individual puddings and serve hot with lashings of custard.

Tip: This technique of cooking something with just the indirect heat of steam on to a metal or glass bowl is what the French call a 'bain marie'. It's a handy trick when you need to cook something very gently, such as egg custard.

