



Smoked Salmon and Pancetta Crostini

A popular hors d'oeuvre; crostini and bruschette can be made in many variations. The crème fraîche in this recipe is light and refreshing

 makes 12 crostini
 prep 10 mins • cook 15 mins

12 small slices of bread, cut from a baguette or ficelle
5 tbsp olive oil
6 slices of pancetta
200g (7oz) smoked salmon
200ml (7fl oz) crème fraîche

2 tbsp wholegrain mustard
3 tbsp capers, rinsed, drained and finely chopped
1 tsp lemon zest
1 tsp lemon juice
freshly ground black pepper
12 whole chives, snipped into 2.5cm (1/2in) lengths, to garnish

Prepare ahead The bread slices can be baked up to 2 hours ahead. The crème fraîche mixture can be made 24 hours in advance. Assemble the bruschette just before serving.

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6). Preheat the grill on its highest setting. Brush each side of the bread slices with olive oil, place them on a baking sheet, and bake for 10 minutes or until crisp. Remove and leave to cool.

2 Grill the pancetta for a few minutes until crisp on both sides. Drain on kitchen paper.

3 Meanwhile, cut the smoked salmon into thin strips about 2cm (3/4in) wide.

4 Mix the crème fraîche with the mustard, the capers, and the lemon zest and juice; season to taste with black pepper.

5 Place the bread slices on a serving plate, divide the crème fraîche mixture between the slices, and top with strips of smoked salmon, pieces of pancetta and chives to garnish.

VARIATION

Classic Italian Crostini



Remove the smoked salmon, replace the crème fraîche mixture with slices of fresh mozzarella, and use fresh basil instead of chives. Brush the bread slices with garlic and olive oil, then lightly pepper the mozzarella. Place a piece of basil on each piece of mozzarella, then wrap it in half a slice of prosciutto. Place the crostini under the grill set to the highest setting, for 3-5 minutes, until the cheese melts.

PANCETTA is widely available from delicatessens and supermarkets but if you cannot find any, use thinly sliced streaky bacon instead. A little grated horseradish can be used instead of mustard; the flavour goes very well with the salmon and pancetta.



Anchovy and Olive Bruschette

These salty canapés are ideal with pre-dinner drinks

 makes 12 bruschette
 prep 10 mins • cook 5 mins

12 slices Italian bread, such as ciabatta, about 2cm (3/4in) thick
1/2 garlic clove
extra virgin olive oil
3-4 tbsp bottled tomato sauce
salt and freshly ground black pepper
115g (4oz) mozzarella cheese, drained and cut into 12 thin slices
1 tsp dried mixed herbs
6 black olives, pitted and sliced
60g jar or can anchovies in olive oil, drained and cut in half lengthways

Prepare ahead Steps 1 and 2 can be done 2 hours in advance and the bruschette grilled before serving.

1 Preheat the grill on its highest setting and position the rack 10cm (4in) from the heat.

2 To make the bruschette bases, toast the bread slices until golden on both sides. Rub 1 side with the cut side of the garlic clove. Brush the same side of each slice with a little olive oil.

3 Spread each bruschette with about 2 tsp tomato sauce and season with salt and pepper to taste. Put 1 slice of mozzarella on each, sprinkle with herbs and top with olive slices and 2 pieces of anchovy in a criss-cross pattern.



4 Grill the bruschette for 2-3 minutes until the mozzarella has melted and is bubbling. Serve hot.

Good with a chilled glass of sparkling prosecco or a tall glass of cold beer.



Scallop and Pesto Crostini

These stylish canapés can also be served as a simple first course

 makes 12 crostini
 prep 10 mins • cook 7 mins

12 slices Italian bread, such as ciabatta, about 2cm (3/4in) thick
1/2 garlic clove
3 tbsp olive oil
6 scallops, shucked
1 tbsp fresh lemon juice
salt and freshly ground black pepper
about 2 tbsp bottled pesto
about 2 tbsp tomato purée
12 basil leaves, to garnish

Prepare ahead Step 1 can be done 1-2 hours in advance.

1 Preheat the grill on its highest setting. Toast the bread slices until golden on both sides. Rub one side with the cut side of the garlic

clove. Lightly brush the same side of each slice with a little olive oil, then set aside.

2 Heat the remaining oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat. Add the scallops, sprinkle with lemon juice, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Fry for 2 minutes on each side, until cooked but still tender; keep warm.

3 Spread one half of each crostini with pesto and the other half with tomato purée.

4 Cut each scallop in half horizontally and put 1 scallop half on top of each crostini. Grind black pepper over the top and garnish each one with a single basil leaf. Serve at once.



Serve with

Crispy roast potatoes (see p336) and a green vegetable of your choice; but try also honey-glazed parsnips (see p338); and in summer, buttered new potatoes and minted garden peas. For a change you could try creamy mashed potatoes (see p338) and spinach, or a serving of rice and peas (see p341), great with gravy.



Flavour boosters

If you haven't been able to source a free-range/organic/corn-fed bird, you might want to consider giving the meal a flavour boost. Try a cranberry and sage sauce – simply mix the ingredients together and warm: 6 tablespoons cranberry jelly; 2 dessertspoons chopped fresh sage; 3 tablespoons lemon juice; salt and fresh black pepper; and a couple of tablespoons of the roasting juices.



Different birds

Small poussins will only take 12 mins a pound plus 12 mins, and 10 minutes resting – so adjust timings accordingly. The meat also dries out quickly so protect the breasts with some streaky bacon rashers. Remember the flavour has had less time to develop in smaller birds so you should definitely think about adding your own (see above) and adding stuffing to the body cavity.



ARRANGEMENT

Arrange the carved chicken on a large platter. For ease of serving, group the wings together, then the legs, and fill in with slices of breast meat. Add slices of stuffing, or serve in a separate dish.



Chicken Stock

Intensely flavoured clear stock made from roasted bones. An ideal base for a fine soup.

🕒 2 hours 🟢 low GI ❄️ freeze **page 92**



Chicken and Pasta Soup

A family favourite, this has all the goodness of the chicken and filling pasta, too.

🕒 20 mins 🟢 low GI ❄️ freeze **page 180**



Cock-a-Leekee

A traditional soup, the combination of chicken and leeks really is something special.

🕒 30 mins 🟢 low fat ❄️ freeze **page 102**



Chicken and Prawn Gumbo

Spicy and filling, you could serve this at a dinner party – it certainly doesn't look like leftovers.

🕒 1 hour 🟢 low fat ❄️ freeze **page 192**



Stir-Fried Chicken

Crisp and fresh combination of vegetables, chicken and chillies – delicious!

🕒 30 mins 🟢 low fat **page 213**



Chicken Salad Wrap

Quick, simple, nutritious. Wholewheat tortilla with chicken breast, crisp leaves, and zingy dressing.

🕒 30 mins 🟢 low fat **page 145**



Chicken and Asparagus Risotto

With the stock used to flavour the risotto as well as the leftover meat, the flavours are sublime.

🕒 30 mins **page 92**



Chicken Omelette

Serve with a green frisée salad for a great light lunch or brunch dish.

🕒 1 hour 🟢 low fat ❄️ freeze **page 192**





Chicken Crêpes

Transform the humble pancake in minutes to this impressive-looking feast.

🕒 20 mins 🟢 low GI ❄️ freeze **page 180**

Thai Green Chicken Curry

By using a shop-bought jar of Thai curry paste, this flavoursome dish is very quick to prepare

 serves 4
 prep 10 mins • cook 10 mins

1 tbsp olive oil
4 tsp shop-bought Thai red or green curry paste (use more paste for a spicier sauce)
4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts, about 140g (5oz) each, cut into bite-sized pieces
2 tbsp light soy sauce
400ml can coconut milk
175g (6oz) open-cap mushrooms, chopped
6 spring onions, trimmed, with the green part cut into 5mm (¼in) slices
salt and freshly ground black pepper
chopped coriander, to garnish

● **Prepare ahead** Complete up to 24 hours in advance and reheat.

1 Heat the oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat. Add the curry paste and stir. Add the chicken and stir-fry for 2 minutes or until lightly browned.

2 Pour in the soy sauce and coconut milk and bring to the boil, stirring. Lower the heat, stir in the mushrooms and most of the spring onions, and season with salt and pepper to taste, then simmer for about 8 minutes or until the chicken is tender and cooked through.





3 Serve hot, garnished with coriander, if using, and the remaining sliced spring onions.

● **Good with** boiled or steamed long-grain rice or plain noodles, as a starter or part of a Thai buffet.



Creamy Tarragon Chicken

Fresh tarragon and cream is a classic pairing in French cuisine

 serves 4
 prep 10 mins • cook 35 mins
 large flameproof casserole
 the dish can be left to cool completely after step 2, then frozen for up to 1 month; thaw at room temperature, then complete the recipe

30g (1oz) butter
1 tbsp rapeseed oil
4 chicken breasts, on the bone
250g (9oz) shallots, sliced
1 tsp dried *herbes de Provence*
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
salt and freshly ground black pepper
250ml (8fl oz) hot chicken stock
120ml (4fl oz) dry white wine
250g (9oz) crème fraîche
2 tbsp chopped tarragon, plus extra sprigs to garnish

● **Prepare ahead** Steps 1 and 2 can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and kept in a covered container in the fridge. Reheat, making sure the chicken is completely heated through before stirring in the crème fraîche.

1 Melt the butter with the oil in a large flameproof casserole over medium-high heat. Add the chicken breasts, skin side down, and fry for 3 minutes or until golden brown, then turn over and continue browning for a further 2 minutes.





2 Keep the chicken breasts skin side up, then sprinkle with the shallots, dried herbs, garlic and salt and pepper to taste. Add the stock and wine and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover the casserole, and leave to simmer for 25 minutes or until the chicken is tender and the juices run clear when pierced with a knife. Lift out the chicken and set aside, then boil the sauce until it is reduced by about half.

3 Stir in the crème fraîche and chopped tarragon and continue cooking until thickened. If the sauce becomes too thick, add more chicken stock; adjust the seasoning, if necessary. Serve the chicken sliced off the bone, coated with the sauce and garnished with tarragon sprigs.

● **Good with** boiled long-grain rice; or try it with mashed potatoes with olive oil, black pepper and chopped pitted black olives.

Chicken in a Pot

A one-pot meal wonderfully flavoured with cider and root vegetables

 serves 4
 prep 10 mins • cook 1½ hrs
 large flameproof casserole
 leave to cool completely after step 3, then freeze for up to 3 months; thaw at room temperature, then reheat.

2 tbsp sunflower oil
1 chicken, about 1.5 kg (3lb 3oz), cleaned and trussed
1 tbsp plain white flour
500ml (16fl oz) dry cider
250ml (8fl oz) chicken stock
1 bouquet garni
salt and freshly ground black pepper
350g (12oz) baby carrots, scraped
350g (12oz) baby new potatoes
2 leeks, thickly sliced
2 tbsp chopped parsley

● **Prepare ahead** Steps 1–3 can be prepared up to 2 days in advance. Slowly bring to the boil before completing step 4.



1 Preheat the oven to 170°C (325°F/Gas 3). Heat the oil in a large flameproof casserole over a medium heat. Add the chicken and brown on all sides, then lift out and set aside. Sprinkle the flour into the casserole and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes. Stir in the cider and stock and bring to the boil.

2 Return the chicken to the casserole, breast-side up, and add the bouquet garni and salt and pepper to taste. Cover and put in the oven for 1¼ hours. Add the vegetables and baste the chicken.




3 Return the casserole to the oven for 30–45 minutes or until the vegetables are tender and the chicken juices run clear when you pierce the thickest part of a leg.

4 Remove from the oven and leave the chicken to stand in the broth for 10 minutes, then taste and adjust the seasoning. Sprinkle with the parsley and serve hot.



Chicken Schnitzels

This quick dish is suitable for a family supper or a dinner party

 serves 4
 prep 10 mins, plus at least 30 mins chilling • cook 12 mins
 can be frozen up to 3 months; thaw at room temperature, then reheat.

45g (1½oz) plain flour
1 egg, beaten
about 60g (2oz) fine breadcrumbs
4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts
salt and freshly ground black pepper
6 tbsp rapeseed oil
2 lemons, cut in half, to serve

● **Prepare ahead** The chicken can be prepared up to step 3, then covered and chilled for up to 8 hours.

1 Put the flour in a shallow bowl, the egg in another bowl and the breadcrumbs in a third bowl. Set aside.

2 Put the chicken breasts, and the thin, small fillets, if attached, between 2 sheets of greaseproof paper and pound with a rolling pin until they are very thin. Season with salt and pepper.

3 Coat the chicken first in the flour, then in the beaten egg and then in the breadcrumbs, pressing them on to both sides. Chill, uncovered, for at least 30 minutes.

4 Heat 3 tbsp of the oil in a non-stick frying pan over medium-high heat. Add 2 of the schnitzels and fry for 3 minutes on each side, or until golden brown and cooked through. Drain on kitchen paper and keep hot.

5 Add the remaining oil to the pan, and fry the remaining schnitzels, as before.

6 Serve immediately, garnished with lemon halves, for squeezing over the schnitzels.

● **Good with** sautéed potatoes and green beans, or cold, cut into slices, with potato salad.

VARIATION

Veal Schnitzels

Substitute 4 thinly sliced veal escalopes for the chicken. Prepare and cook as above.



Techniques eggs

Separating

Many recipes call for eggs that have been separated into whites and yolks. Here's a simple how-to.



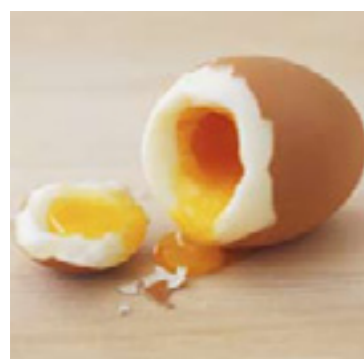
1 Have two bowls ready. Tap the egg against a hard surface (the lip of the bowl is good for this) to break its shell. Insert your fingers in the break and halve the shell roughly along its equator, keeping the egg's contents in one shell half.



2 While shifting the contents back and forth between the shell halves, allow as much white as possible to fall into one bowl. Finish by dropping the yolk into the second bowl and discarding the shell.

Boiling

So simple, but it can easily go wrong. Make sure your eggs are at room temperature, and use this reliable method for a perfect egg every time.



1 Put the egg in a small saucepan and cover it by at least 5cm (2in) of cold water. Bring the water to a boil over a high heat, then lower the heat so the water simmers.

2 For a soft-boiled egg (see left) which has a set white and a runny yolk, simmer gently for 2-3 minutes.

3 For a hard-boiled egg when both the yolk and white will be set, continue to simmer, allowing about 10 minutes in total.

4 At the end of the cooking time, place the saucepan in the sink under the tap and run cold water into it to displace the hot water and stop the cooking process. Continue until the egg is cool enough to handle.

5 To peel a boiled egg, crack the shell at the rounded end, and, using the sides of your thumbs, push the shell and thin inner membrane away from the cooked egg, trying not to dig into the egg white too much.

Poaching

Poaching is a very healthy way to prepare eggs. Choose fresh eggs, as the egg white will be more likely to stay together.



1 Bring a pan of water to a gentle boil and add a little vinegar. Have ready another pan of simmering salted water. Crack the egg onto a small plate, without breaking the yolk, then slide the egg carefully into the pan of vinegared water.



2 Using a basting motion with a spoon, envelop the yolk with the white to shape the egg for 20 seconds, or until the white is just set. Adjust the heat so the water is at a gentle boil. Poach for 3-5 minutes, or until the white is completely set.



3 Using a slotted spoon, carefully lift the egg from the water and dip it into the simmering salted water for 30 seconds. Then place it on a clean dish towel to drain briefly. It is now ready to be served.

REMOVING ANY STRAY YOLK

For egg whites to be whisked until stiff, it's important that they be free from even the smallest speck of yolk. This is because yolks are fatty and fat inhibits air incorporation. If, when separating the eggs, some yolk has fallen into your whites, remove it either by scooping it out using a bit of broken shell, or by touching the yolk with the corner of a piece of damp kitchen paper (the yolk should adhere to the paper). In some cases too much yolk will have landed in the whites. If that happens, you'll need to discard the whites and start again.

Scrambling

Allow 2-3 eggs per person. The last-minute addition of cream stops them cooking, so they stay creamy.



1 Beat the eggs well, then season them with salt and pepper. Heat a non-stick or well-seasoned frying pan or skillet over medium heat, then add a knob of butter and melt it. Pour in the beaten eggs. If you want large curds, allow the eggs to set for a bit before you start to scramble them.



2 Using a wooden spoon or rubber spatula, pull the mass of setting egg to the centre of the pan, so uncooked egg can come into contact with the hot pan. Continue this process, stirring slowly and gently, for about 2 minutes, breaking up the curds somewhat. For smaller, tighter curds, don't wait as long to start scrambling, and stir more vigorously.



3 Just before you think the eggs are ready - the eggs will continue to cook when off the heat, as the pan is still warm - remove the pan from the heat and add the cream. Stir to mix the cream quickly into the eggs, then serve.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS WHEN SCRAMBLING EGGS

- The eggs should be well beaten so that the whites and yolks are completely combined.
- Season with salt and pepper only after the eggs are beaten and you're ready to cook them, because salt can thin them out.
- Don't let the butter brown before the eggs go in, but make sure the pan's hot enough to melt it in a few seconds.

Making an omelette

Without doubt one of the most glorious egg dishes. For best results, use three eggs for a one-person omelette.



1 Beat the eggs then season with salt and pepper. Melt a knob of butter in a 15-20cm (6-8in) omelette or frying pan over medium-high heat. When the butter begins to foam, add the eggs and shake the pan gently. Stir with a fork while continuing to shake.



2 As soon as the eggs are set but still soft, in 20-30 seconds, stop stirring. With the help of the fork, fold the side of the omelette nearest you halfway over itself. Grasp the handle of the pan underneath, with your palm facing upward, and lift the pan to a 45-degree angle.



3 With your free hand, sharply tap the top of the handle closest to the pan, to encourage the other side of the omelette to curl over the folded portion. Use the fork to fully close the omelette.



Adding a filling

Fillings may be savoury - grated cheese, cooked vegetables such as courgettes, asparagus, or mushrooms - or sweet, such as jams or a variety of fruit compotes. If using a cooked filling, it must be hot. Fill the omelette as soon as the eggs are set, before folding.