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No resting on her laurels

Putting a Mary Berry cookbook through a 'tried and tested' ordeal may seem like sacrilege – after all, the former

Great British Bake Off judge is a culinary legend.

But not even Berry rests on her laurels. At 85, she's still writing cookbooks and for this one, *Simple Comforts*, also stars in an accompanying BBC series.

We picked two of the recipes from the new collection and gave them a go, to see if Berry still has it...

Claire Spreadbury tested: double baked mushroom souffles

Making a souffle strikes fear into the heart of any cook, me included. I spent a wonderful afternoon concocting this dish, which you can prep ahead of time.

It was all going swimmingly, but after whisking the whites to stiff peaks, the recipe says to "stir about a tablespoon of egg whites into the egg and mushroom mixture and carefully fold it in, keeping everything light and airy". So I stirred through a good spoonful and momentarily stared into my mixing bowl, which still had a lot of egg white left in it.

BY ELLA WALKER

It's obvious when you think about it, that the rest of the mixture also needs to be stirred through, but I left it at that and popped them in the oven. After 15 minutes, they were wonderfully golden but they were also flat as a pancake.

Thankfully, the leftover ingredients contained enough to make another two souffles. So I started again. The second coming was much more successful, though it's worth noting that these souffles don't rise enormously. I might make them again at Christmas.

Ella Walker tested: brioche frangipane apple pudding

All four of those words sound good – brioche, frangipane, apple, and pudding. Especially if you, like me, have a real thing for frangipane – that slightly gooey, slightly crumbly texture, like the top inch of sponge in a sugar-syrup drenched drizzle cake.

This recipe, as you'd hope, is an easy to follow doddle. You simply squish slices of brioche into the bottom of a butter greased tin, and mix the rest of the ingredients together.

The trickiest bit is slicing the apples thinly enough, and then arranging them on top.

Nicely golden, it turned out light in the middle and crisp on top, while the apple slices were slightly dried out and chewy – in a good way.

The whole thing tasted like a mellow, cakey take on a Bakewell tart.

Full disclosure, I did forget to brush on the melted apricot jam – it smelt too good to wait and fuff with jam, and a dollop of creme fraiche on the side

happened before I could stop myself – but I will endeavour to apply this golden lacquer when I bake it again.

Which I will, because this pudding is autumn in a tin.

● **Simple Comforts by Mary Berry is published by BBC Books, priced £26. Photography Laura Edwards.**



BRIOCHE FRANGIPANE APPLE PUDDING

(SERVES 8)

INGREDIENTS

- ½ a brioche loaf
- 175g butter, softened, plus extra for greasing
- 175g caster sugar
- 1tsp almond extract
- 175g ground almonds
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 25g plain flour
- About 2 red dessert apples, skin on, cored and thinly sliced
- 2tbsp apricot jam
- 1tbsp flaked almonds, toasted
- Icing sugar, for dusting

METHOD

1. You will need a large, shallow ovenproof dish, about 28cm in diameter. Preheat the oven to 200C/180C fan/Gas 6 and grease the dish with butter.
2. Slice the brioche into thin slices, about 5mm (quarter of an inch), and arrange these over the base of the dish. Make sure you cover the base and fill in all the gaps, but don't overlap the slices.
3. Measure the butter and sugar into a food processor and whizz until pale and fluffy. Add the almond extract, ground almonds, eggs and flour, then whizz again until the mixture is soft and creamy and there are no lumps. Be careful not to over-process.
4. Spoon the mixture over the brioche base and spread it to the sides. Arrange the sliced apples in a neat overlapping circular pattern over the top. Bake the pudding in the oven for about 40 minutes until lightly golden all over and firm in the centre when lightly pressed.
5. Melt the jam with two tablespoons of water in a small pan. Brush over the surface and sprinkle with flaked almonds.
6. Dust the pudding with icing sugar and serve warm.

