



The essential companion for dessert lovers

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Body

Sweet-toothed superstar and bestselling baker Natalie Paull returns with *Beatrix Bakes: Another Slice*, a new compilation of colourful, creative recipes to delight fans and newcomers alike.

These are the cakes and desserts Nat has loved to eat since closing her cult cafe and bakery in inner Melbourne in 2022.

The brownie Ingredients

cooking **oil** spray 200g egg (approximately 4 eggs) 300g raw caster (superfine) sugar 110g good bittersweet chocolate (around 50 to 60 per cent cocoa) 240g unsalted butter 90g plain (all-purpose) flour 60g Dutch (unsweetened) cocoa powder 5g (heaped 1/2 tsp) sea salt flakes 180g good extra dark chocolate (around 70 per cent cocoa) 110g full-fat cream cheese, softened to room temperature Method

1. Heat the oven to 150C. Lightly spray a 23cm square, 5cm-deep cake tin with cooking **oil** and line the base and sides with baking paper. Ensure any flappy paper edges are trimmed flush with the tin. Combine the egg and sugar in the bowl of an electric stand mixer. Using the paddle attachment, beat on speed four (below medium) for eight minutes until you have a thick and pale foam.

2. While the mix beats, weigh the bittersweet chocolate into a small heatproof bowl. Heat the butter to bubbly hot (stovetop or microwave) and pour it over. Stir until the chocolate has melted and is smooth. Don't worry about a small lump of chocolate or two, but any more and you should set up a double boiler and continue to heat the chocolate/butter a little further until properly melted.

3. Scrape the warm chocolate/butter mix into the egg mix and beat for five minutes on speed five (medium) - it will look like a fluffy and flowy chocolate mousse. While it mixes, weigh the flour and cocoa together and sift into a small bowl. Weigh the salt flakes on top. Chop the extra-dark chocolate into fine shards and add 130g to a separate bowl. Tear up the cream cheese into small hazelnut-sized chunks to sit on top of the chocolate. Set aside.

4. Stop the mixer and tip in the sieved dry ingredients. Beat on speed two (above low) for one minute until the flour is absorbed. Take the bowl off the mixer and stir in the chocolate and cream cheese. Some cream cheese lumps will remain and some will smear through, lightening the batter slightly - all of this is good. Scrape the batter into the

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prepared tin and smooth the top with an offset spatula. Scatter the remaining extra-dark chocolate on top. If you find a few too-large nuggets of cream cheese when scraping and smoothing, massage them into the ideal size with the tip of your offset spatula.

5. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes until the top of the brownie is slightly puffed, has a noticeable cracked border about 2cm from the edge and fine fissures further across the surface. My PST (Perfect Squidge Temperature) hits at 95C, with sticky clumps of mottled paste (not liquid chocolate). Bake for five to 10 minutes longer if you want a more cakey brownie (internal temperature 100C). If you want super-gooey filling, cook it for five to 10 minutes less, but you will definitely have to chill before cutting. Internal temperature taking is genius for brownies - no matter the batter, recipe or oven, you can always get the squidge right.

6. Cool at room temperature for around 30 minutes before cutting with a hot, damp knife, or chill it for a creamy fudge texture. Cut the square in half and then cut each half into five equal rectangles (get the ruler out for portioning precision). The first warm bar, with still-molten chocolate chunks, is one of the greatest kitchen gifts bestowed upon a home baker.

Makes 10 brownie bars or 9 large squares.

Adaptrix It's a bit nutty

Add 120g roughly chopped (to about the size of your pinky fingertip) lightly toasted nuts, keeping a smattering to sprinkle on top. Pecans and walnuts are faves for the mellifluous texture. Avoid almonds, as they are too jarring against the soft brownie texture. Hazelnuts get a hall pass if chopped to a medium coarseness (half pinky fingertip) - heads up, they are very, very good with the Mocha Adaptrix.

It's a bit fruity

If you are Team Fruit With Chocolate, press frozen raspberries (fresh ones will scorch) into the top after smoothing the batter. During a test bake, I topped a batch with some syrupy preserved cumquats and it was mind-bendingly GOOD! Don't swirl the fruit through, as it will release its moisture and can form unpleasantly squelchy internal pockets.

Mocha

Coffee, more than salt or vanilla, will elevate the chocolate flavour - I add this for adults. Add 6g of instant coffee powder to dissolve with the hot butter.

The big chill

Score maximum brownie points and make the batter, then delay the bake. After smoothing the batter into the tin, chill overnight - uncovered is fine. Bake as above - just increase the time by 10+ minutes to allow for the cold start. Some baking boffins swear this melds the ingredients to make a better brownie. I just like that I can mix, rest and bake for easy warm brownie joy.

Flourless chocolate cake Ingredients

cooking oil spray 150g unsalted butter 140g good bittersweet chocolate (50 to 60 per cent cocoa) 140g good milk chocolate (30 per cent-plus cocoa) 140g egg yolks (from approximately 7 eggs) 210g egg whites (from approximately 7 eggs) 100g dark brown sugar 2g (1/2 tsp) sea salt flakes 70g Dutch (unsweetened) cocoa powder, plus extra for dusting 90g crème fraîche 3g (heaped 1/4 tsp) cream of tartar 140g caster (superfine) Sugar

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 160C. Spray the base and side of a 20cm x 7.5cm round cake tin with cooking oil spray. Place 10cm tall baking paper strips along the tin wall, using cooking oil spray to seal the strips where they overlap. Place a snug paper circle on the base.

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2. Make a double boiler by filling a saucepan with 5cm of water and bring to a low simmer on the stove. Chop up the butter and place with the chocolates in a 35cm heatproof bowl, then place over the pan. Heat until the chocolate and butter have just melted, stirring occasionally with a balloon whisk. Keep the mix warm - I usually turn the double boiler off but leave the bowl on top until I'm ready for the next step.
3. The temperature of the batter components is crucial: overheat the chocolate base and it will look like thick, oily lumps. You can keep using it - the cake will just bake flatter and denser. If the chocolate base is too cool, it will firm up by the time the whites are folded in, requiring more vigorous (air-killing) folding - 70C is ideal!
4. While the chocolate melts, start the egg yolk foam. Whip the egg yolks, dark brown sugar and salt in the bowl of an electric stand mixer with the whisk attachment on speed eight (under high) for five minutes until pale brown and thick. If you are a one-bowl house (like me), scrape the foam out into a small mixing bowl and set aside.
5. Egg yolk and sugar foams are sturdy and can hold more than egg white- based ones. Weigh the cocoa into a small bowl and set aside with a sieve for later. Weigh the cr#xE8;me fraiche into a container to heat it in (stovetop or microwave) and set aside for later. Clean the stand mixer bowl well and put the egg whites and cream of tartar in. Using the whisk attachment, whip on speed eight (under high) until the whites have changed from foamy to stiff and white - around two to three minutes.
6. Start adding the caster sugar to the whites - VERY gradually - about a heaped tablespoon every 30 seconds, so the whole process takes around three to four minutes. It is imperative to the success of the cake that the meringue is very stiff and shiny. Reduce to speed one (low) for one minute at the end to even out the air bubbles.
7. While the final sugar is being added to the meringue, return to building the chocolate base. Check your chocolate/butter mix is quite warm, then fold in the egg yolk foam. Sift over the cocoa powder and fold in. Heat the cr#xE8;me fraiche until melty/steamy (it doesn't matter if it looks curdled) and fold that in too. Finally, fold in one-third of the whipped meringue. When the first addition is almost completely incorporated (still streaky), fold in the remaining meringue until very few streaks remain. Do a final fold with a clean flexible plastic spatula to eradicate any final streaks. The mix should look fluffy, like chocolate mousse. Scrape the batter carefully into the lined tin. Smooth the top with an offset spatula.
8. Adding the second portion of whites/meringue before it's completely incorporated maintains more air overall. Concentrate on making the batter streak-free after the final whites addition. Bake for 45 to 55 minutes. The cake is cooked when there are puffed cracks at the edges, the top is matte dark brown and a poke of the tin produces a firm-set wobble (internal temperature 80 to 85C). If you are using a skewer to test the cake, there will be batter on the skewer but it will look gooey, not liquid.
9. Remove from the oven and cool for a minimum of two hours (warm and fragile) or overnight (more set) before gently inverting the cake onto a cooling rack and then re-inverting it onto a cake stand. Dust with the extra Dutch cocoa. If leaving overnight to cool, drape a clean, dry tea towel (dish towel) over the top and leave at room temperature.
10. I love this cake the most when it has matured overnight. A cute little waist may form on the side of the cake if the cake is removed from the tin while too warm - totally natural as it is totally flourless. Allow the cake to cool in the tin overnight for a reduced waist. Overcooked cake will still be servable - just send to the table with some extra cream and juicy berries. Undercooked cake should have a sturdy wall around its too gooey centre. Serve as a molten chocolate pudding cake!

Adaptrix Add fruit or nuts but not almond meal

A boozy festive cake and a tribute to the brilliant Le Doris chocolate cake from Simca's Cuisine by Simone Beck (Julia Child's peer). Simmer (or microwave covered) 120g chopped raisins with 120ml whisky until the liquid evaporates. Whiz 100g toasted almonds with the cocoa. Fold in the raisins and cocoa nuts just after the cr#xE8;me fraiche. Because of the nutty/fruity add-ins, bake it in a larger 25cm tin. It will take the same bake time.

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Top the completely cooled cake with Milk chocolate (reverse) ganache and a sprinkle of cacao nibs or more toasted almonds. Huzzah!

Makes a cake to serve 6 to 10 people.

Lemon cream tart Ingredients

1 Brisee butter crust rolled into a 24cm round 4cm deep tart tin and blind baked to medium golden brow (see recipe below) Lemon custard filling

300g egg (approximately 6 eggs) 20g egg yolk (from approximately 1 egg, reserving the white to seal the tart shell) 4 best lemons 240g caster (superfine) sugar 300ml cream (35 per cent milkfat) 1g (1/4 tsp) sea salt flakes Method

1. Fill a 25cm-wide saucepan with 5cm of water, place on the stovetop and bring to a low simmer. Choose a stainless-steel bowl to sit on top that is slightly wider than the pan so the bottom of the bowl won't touch the water. Into that bowl (before placing it over the saucepan), place the 300g of egg and the yolk. Place the egg white in a separate small bowl and lightly whisk to break it up - you'll use this to seal the tart shell later. Finely grate the zest of one lemon, then juice all the lemons, strain and weigh 180ml of juice. Add the zest into the juice and set aside. For the next step, have all the components separate and ready to build the filling fast. This will stop the sugar and lemon juice reacting with the egg yolk and little hard orange lumps forming.

2. Add the sugar into the egg bowl and hand whisk together until combined, but not frothy. Whisk in the lemon juice/zest, then whisk in the cream and salt until fully combined. Place the bowl on the double boiler, gently whisking often until the mix reaches 60C - around 10 to 12 minutes. The custard will get a little thicker, the foam will dissipate and the custard will turn a more sunshiny yellow. If the filling cooks fast and gets chunky and set at the edges of the bowl, just give the mix a vigorous whisk off the stove to redistribute the heat. Pre-cooking the filling gives you a creamier mouthfeel and means the custard won't separate into layers during baking.

3. Remove the bowl from the heat and pour the filling through a fine sieve into a measuring jug. Discard the zest. If you have a little froth on the top you can spoon this off, but it's not vital. Set the filling aside at room temperature while you prepare the crust. Preheat your oven to 120C and adjust the oven racks - set one in the lower part of the oven and remove all the ones above it, allowing space to manoeuvre a jug in easily to pour the filling in later.

4. Place the blind-baked crust, still in the tin, on a shallow baking tray. If there are any large cracks or dipped sides, massage a little leftover dough to a soft paste consistency and gently patch any large fissures - taking care not to press hard and break the crust. Then meticulously brush the inside of the tart with the whisked egg white. Return the baking tray and crust to the oven and bake for three minutes to seal the crust before filling. With the tart still in the oven, and your eye on where the crust edge is lowest, carefully and slowly pour the custard into the crust to fill as far as you can. If your jug, when tilted, is too big for the oven, switch to a smaller cup to scoop in the last of the mix. Don't overfill, or the filling will cascade between the crust and tin. I have given you a little extra filling in case you need it (slightly larger tin, super tall crust sides with no blind-baking shrinkage - you genius!). You can cook the leftover on the double boiler to 80C, then chill to set in a wee dish. Eat with cream.

5. Bake for 40 to 50 minutes (I always check after 40, and then check in five-minute increments) until there is a 7cm (23/4 in) diameter centre of quivering, thickshakey filling in the middle of the tart. This wobbly centre will continue to cook and set firmer upon cooling. Turn the oven off, keep the door closed and leave for five minutes. The wobbly centre should have set firm and feel like the most delicate bouncy custard trampoline when touched lightly with your fingertips. Leave another five minutes if you think it's still a bit too wobbly. I try to avoid breaking the surface with a probe thermometer but if you need the assurance, the read should be 70C internal before you turn the oven off to rest the tart.

6. Remove from the oven and allow to cool at room temperature for at least one hour (longer for deeper tarts) before cutting the first slice. You can also chill to hasten the setting (and eating). Cracks along the crustline will appear if overcooked or over time, if you keep the tart for a few days. To repair, a little smear across the crack towards the crust with a small palette knife will cover it up. Tart-eating temperature: Cool to room temperature for

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one hour, then chill for 30 minutes (unchilled is a little too tremulous). Or chill further for creamier, stable slices. Dust with icing sugar and brulée or leave it pure sunshiny yellow.

Overcooked? Slightly browned overcooked lemon tarts can be salvaged! Get the tart into the fridge as soon and as carefully as possible. When it is chilled to just cold, spread the top with billowy whipped cream and a fresh grating of lemon zest. Hello, lemon cream pie! Or follow the brulée steps. The filling will be a little cottage cheesy curd-like at the side, but the centre should still be silky smooth and lemon delicious.

Adaptrix Lime

Lime matches lemon in acidity, so swap the juice amounts gram for gram. Add a final fresh zing of freshly grated lime zest over the baked tart.

Meyer lemon

Add the fine zest of two Meyer lemons to the filling. Reduce the sugar by 30g to account for the subtle sourness.

Makes a 24cm tart for 6 to 8 people.

Brisbee butter crust Ingredients

175g plain (all-purpose) flour 130g unsalted butter, cold and sliced into small tiles 2cm square and 5mm thick 3g (heaped 1/4 tsp) fine sea salt 60ml iced water Method

1. Lightly toss the flour, butter tiles and salt together in a wide mixing bowl and chill for 30 minutes. Then break and flake the butter pieces between your fingers while tossing with the flour until the butter pieces are the size of a thick thumbnail. The flour will have taken on just the faintest yellow hue. Scatter the water over the flour/butter mix and lightly toss through - it won't look like anything has changed with the mix but the smear (fraisage) will really bring the dough together.

2. Tip the crumbly dry flour/butter mix onto your work surface and make a pile which we will call pile A. Imagine pile A is sitting at 4 o'clock on a clock face. Using the taut heel of your palm, smear the dough 20cm away from the pile, across the bench to 11 o'clock to form pile B. The smearing will start to cohere the dough. Employ your non-smearing hand to stop the back end of the dough from scattering back away from the starting pile.

3. Drag all of pile B back to 4 o'clock and smear it again. Do this four to eight times (kitchen temperature dependent - it will take far less time in a warm kitchen) until the dough does two things: 1. The VERY dry shaggy patches disappear, and 2. The dough forms an almost cohesive mass when softly squeezed together. It's okay if a few dry, shaggy bits remain.

4. Wrap loosely in plastic wrap and firmly squeeze into a flat, fat disc - this will be the final step in bringing the dough together, and the dough will feel like quite stiff playdough. Chill the dough overnight to hydrate fully.

5. To roll, bring the dough to cool and pliable temperature (around 15 to 30 minutes at room temperature) and place it on a lightly floured surface. Press the dough out a little with the palm of your hand to ease it into the start of rolling. This helps to prevent large cracks. Give the dough one or two short pressured rolls with the pin before lifting and moving the dough 90 degrees, making the rolls longer as the dough circle widens. Dust underneath the dough at regular intervals to prevent sticking.

6. For a 24cm round 4cm tart tin, roll out the dough to a 35cm circle, about 4mm thick. Trim, then gently lift and flop the dough in to the tin. If you're making smaller tarts and need to re-roll, stack the offcuts and press together. Rest for 10 minutes and re-roll once only. The shrinkage gets worse with each re-roll. Working in sections, tuck the dough right into the corner and against the side of the tart tin to prevent air pockets, then use your fingers to push the excess dough off the top. For individual tins, cut circles slightly larger than the tins and line in the same way, cutting off the excess. If lining a classic pie dish, loosely position the side dough on the lip, then press the excess

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off. Take a wooden skewer and deeply press lines along the lip at around 1cm intervals, radiating out. Freeze for at least one hour before blind baking.

7. To blind bake, preheat the oven to 200C. Cover the frozen dough with a large piece of aluminium foil (dull side down), tucking it snugly into the corner of the tin. Fill the foil liner with approximately 750g caster (superfine) sugar, then place the tart shell on a heavy baking tray. Reduce the heat to 170C and bake for one hour until the crust base is a fully realised tan brown colour. If the base crust is still a little pale, remove the foil and return to the oven for five minutes - watching closely until the crust base reaches peak crisp and brown.

Makes 370g. Enough for one 23-24cm fluted loose bottomed tart tin/single-crust 24cm pie dish/6 shallow individual tart tins 12cm in diameter.

Churros & chocolate Ingredients

155g bakers' (strong/bread) flour 2g (1 tsp) freshly ground cinnamon 3 to 4 large eggs 250ml water 110g unsalted butter 20g caster (superfine) sugar 2g (1/4 tsp) fine sea salt Approximately 1.5 litres (6 cups) rice bran oil, for frying (or other neutral-flavoured oil such as canola or peanut oil) Cinnamon sugar

100g raw (or plain) caster (superfine) sugar 3g (1 heaped tsp) freshly ground cinnamon 1g (1/4 tsp) sea salt flakes, to taste Hot chocolate sauce

100ml cream (35 per cent milkfat) 100ml full-cream (whole) milk 120g good bittersweet chocolate (50 to 60 per cent cocoa) 30ml PX sherry (optional but so nice, even at breakfast) 30g raw caster (superfine) sugar 10g Dutch (unsweetened) cocoa powder 1g (1/4 tsp) sea salt flakes Method

1. Weigh the flour and cinnamon together and set aside. Crack three eggs into a bowl and hand whisk lightly. Weigh 120g and hold the excess (and the last egg) to the side in case you need it to adjust the batter. The egg amount matters here. Too much and the churros will be explosive and too eggy inside - not as crisp for dipping. Too little and the churros will be heftier in texture. You can also use excess egg whites if the batter needs any extra egg to reach the right consistency.

2. In a 20cm wide saucepan, heat the water, butter, sugar and salt over a low heat until the butter has melted. Then turn up the heat to medium-high to boil. The butter can start at any temperature, but just ensure it is melted before the boiling begins. Too much evaporation here will mean your final churros are a bit heftier.

3. The moment the mixture boils, immediately remove the saucepan from the heat and tip all the flour/cinnamon in. Stir well with a wooden spoon to form a ball of stiff paste. Return the saucepan to medium- high heat. Cook the dough ball for around three minutes, smooshing it across the base of the saucepan constantly. The ball should leave a thin blond film of dough on the base.

4. Scrape the cooked dough into the bowl of an electric stand mixer and beat on speed two (above low) with the paddle attachment for three minutes. This will mitigate the initial heat so the eggs don't scramble when they meet the dough.

5. Increase to speed four (below medium) and start adding the egg in three parts, allowing the thick batter to 'recover' after each addition - it should look similar to its thick batter, pre-egg appearance (rather than developing blobby gloop-covered lumps). Stop and scrape after each addition. You can beat in the eggs without a stand mixer. Leave the dough ball in the pot and stir to cool for five minutes. Add the egg in batches, beating well with the wooden spoon. The batter will form a V off the spoon. You will need to employ maximum muscle to beat it! Dig deep, batter beater ... You can do it!

6. After all the egg has been added, assess the batter consistency. Pull the paddle up out of the bowl - the batter should be clinging to the paddle, forming a 5cm long V-shape. If the V looks more like a wide U, re-attach the paddle and add more egg in small amounts to achieve the goal. Load the batter into a piping (icing) bag with a large (size nine) star nozzle, place in an air tight container and chill overnight.

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7. The next day, bring the churros batter out of the fridge. Combine the cinnamon sugar ingredients in a shallow roasting tray so there is plenty of room to roll the fried churros. Set aside. Weigh the ho-cho ingredients together in small bowl and set over a double boiler. Don't start heating it yet. We will hit go when the churros are almost all fried.

8. Set up a 25cm wide pot with the oil. Slowly heat the frying oil to 190C. Set up a cooling rack over a shallow tray beside your fry area to drain the churros post-fry.

9. Hover the nozzle 10cm above the oil and pipe lengths of batter, letting them drop into the fryer. Sever the batter from the nozzle with scissors or by swiping your index finger across the tip then pushing the batter off, into the oil, with your thumb. This freestyle fry-way will give you churros with lovely natural bends in them. Just be careful your fingers don't touch the oil. Alternate fry style: pipe 10cm lengths onto small strips of baking paper sprayed with cooking oil and then lay the papers into the fryer in batches. Shimmy the paper away with tongs as soon as the churro starts to bubble. This will give you super straight and evenly sized churros - perfect if you don't like the freestyle curves.

10. Fry around five at a time so the oil temperature doesn't drop. Fry for four to five minutes, gently turning with tongs a few times during the fry until they are a medium brown colour and the surface is beautifully blistered. Using tongs, pluck the churros out of the oil to drain on a cooling rack while you fry the rest of the batter. When you are two-thirds through the batter, turn on the heat under the ho-cho double boiler. Hand whisk occasionally until the chocolate is melted and the sauce is hot. Turn the heat off the double boiler but leave the bowl on top to keep warm.

11. To serve, gently toss the freshly cooked churros in the cinnamon sugar and pile onto plates. Serve with the steamy hot ho-cho on the side. If the churros explode it is because of steam build-up, so either the dough was too wet before the egg was added or too much egg was added. They will be closer in texture to a porras, churros' fluffier, thicker cousin. They may deflate, but eat them regardless, dusted heavily with the cinnamon sugar ... they'll still be delicious!

Adaptrix This recipe is so classic I'm loath to adjust anything with these.

Makes 20 churros, 10cm long.

Beatrix Bakes: Another Slice, by Natalie Paull. Hardie Grant Books. \$50.

Load-Date: September 3, 2024