



FOOD NEWS FOR MARCH 2008

Food News For March 2008

Good food; great cooking; healthy eating.

It was a fabulous beginning to March, the sun was shining and the days seemed full of the promise of spring. However, that has now disappeared to be replaced by wind and storms. Not good for the crops that have started to grow. It may be that this cold spell holds back the new veg and we have to wait a little longer for the new seasons produce to begin. Plus with Easter coming so early this year we may have to think about a different type of Easter menu.

I have made some suggestions for some easy Easter menus which will allow you to spend time outside enjoying the sunshine (fingers crossed) that also includes, at your request, some vegetarian dishes.

I always think that Easter is a good time for baking and while making Hot Cross buns can be a lengthy process(but definitely worth while) a quick yummy chocolate cake will always be appreciated, so I've included a good fail safe recipe if you want to give it a try.

I've also included some tips on keeping the five a day regime and some ideas for healthy lunch boxes for children, again something that I have been asked for.

Enjoy your food

Debbie Pryer

Pass the salt

We all know that too much salt isn't good for us but labels can be confusing and it's not easy to tell if food is high or low in salt. Just remember

Over 1.5g per 100g is high

Below 0.3g per 100 g is low

Five a day - the easy way.

Are you struggling to make the five a day target here are some quick and easy ideas to help you reach the magic number

Breakfast time - why not have **FRUIT JUICE** (counts as one of your five) and a piece of fruit for example a **chopped up banana** on your cereal or porridge.



Mid morning - keep your fruit bowl on your desk and help yourself to a tasty piece of fruit for your mid morning break

Lunch time - always have at least two portions of fruit or veg with your lunch. It might be a tomato with your ham sandwich followed by a juicy peach or a green salad to go with your chicken wrap followed by a bunch of red grapes.

Mid afternoon - fed up with fruit, why not keep yourself going with some raw veg sticks such as peppers or carrots?

Evening meal and another chance to add another couple of veg to your total. Always have at least two veg with your evening meal and why not make them large portions.



Fed up with the same old fruit and veg?

Decide to try a **new fruit** or veg each week. Keep a note to remind yourself what you liked and buy that more often. Don't forget canned frozen or dried can count towards your five a day.

Buy in season – this will mean it tastes better and what more it will cost less.

Try having **A VEGGIE MEAL** once a week to boost your overall total.

This might be a veggie chilli or a **delicious colourful stir fry.**

Whenever you cook or eat think about how you can add fruit or veg to the meal. This might be **adding a portion** of veg to a ready meal or having a **salad** as an accompaniment to a meal when you are eating out or adding extra veg to a casserole at home.

For kids bite size is best **Sweetcorn, carrots and little tomatoes** are sweet and appeal to children and don't forget fruits such as **strawberries and grapes.**



Healthy Happy Children

A healthy lunchbox should help to improve your child's attention, behaviour and learning throughout the day

A good lunch box will include

- At least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables or salad
- Protein such as meat, fish, eggs, hummus, or peanut butter
- A starchy food such as bread or pasta, rice, couscous, noodles, potatoes or other cereals
- A dairy food such as semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, cheese, yoghurt, or fromage frais
- Oily fish, such as salmon, at least once every three weeks.

Snacks such as crisps should **not** be included. Instead, try nuts and seeds, savoury crackers or bread sticks.

Meat products such as sausage rolls, individual pies, corned meat sausages/chipolatas should be included only occasionally.

Best drinks are water or sugar free drinks.

Sweet things such as chocolate bars, chocolate-coated biscuits and sweets should **not** be included. Cakes and biscuits are OK but only as part of a balanced meal.

Some ideas for lunch boxes

Wraps, more fun than sandwiches!

Trying filling with grated cheese and grated apple or

Tinned salmon, mashed with tomato sauce or

Humous and baby spinach or



Or try a **fasta pasta salad** - Mix cooked and cooled pasta with

veg such as sweetcorn, chopped peppers, salad onions, cherry tomatoes, cucumber, celery, mushrooms etc. Dress with mayonnaise mixed with tomato puree or lemon juice. Add chicken, ham tuna, salmon, cheese it you want.



Or how about a **noodle doodle salad** - Mix cooked and cooled noodles with bean sprouts, sliced red pepper, spring onions.

Dress with a mix of peanut butter, chilli sauce and a little sunflower or ground nut oil or make up your own favourite dressing

Or perhaps **Kebabs** - thread chunks of food onto a wooden skewer. Try cooked meat or cheese, cucumber and cherry tomatoes or make a fruit kebab with strawberries and peaches, kiwi and grapes.

When it's cold outside you can keep food warm in a flask. Soup makes a delicious lunch. **When it's warm outside keep the food cool.** Try freezing a carton or plastic bottle of juice overnight. The frozen drink will help keep food cool and will have defrosted by lunchtime. Make sure the food is wrapped so it doesn't dry out by lunch time. At the weekend get the children involved in the kitchen making things like cookies and muffins which they can take to school in the week

Don't forget if you need someone to deliver cookery lessons, healthy eating workshops for all year groups or sessions for parents in your school I can help. Just give me call on 01622 727543 or e mail debbie@debbiepryer.co.uk Check out my website to see some of the work that I have done.

Easter Menus

To begin if its cold go for a soup, perhaps watercress. If its good weather go for a platter of nibbles, try veggie crudités with a humous dip, bread sticks, or perhaps some smoked salmon on blinis with sour cream or your own favourite luxury. Remember the starter isn't supposed to fill you up it's to get your taste buds working

**For the main course why not roast your self a fabulous free range chicken, serve with mashed potato with cheese, roasted onions and purple sprouting broccoli.
Or for something more traditional roast a leg of lamb and serve with red wine gravy, Dauphinoise potatoes, green vegetables and new season carrots
For vegetarians go with a red onion tart tatin topped with new season snowy white goats cheese and serve green salad with honey dressing.**

**For dessert I think a lemon tart or creamy lemon syllabub.
(Easily made the day before)
For traditional fare go with rhubarb or apple crumble and a large jug of hot creamy custard**



This month The Farmer Giles Award goes to sellers at farmers markets who charge top prices for not so top produce. My particular beef is with a trader at Maidstone Farmers Market who sells vegetables and also has free range eggs. I purchased an expensive dozen and next morning cracked some to poach for breakfast, only to find that they went flat as pancakes (a sign of a very old egg). What a disappointment. Maybe it's because of the ethos of farmers market to sell **fresh** local produce that added to my dismay or maybe it was just that I couldn't take them back and demand fresh!

For a nice day out with the children and a food theme you might like to try **The Royal School for the Deaf at Monkshill Farm, Nr Faversham, ME13 9EH 11th – 14th April –**

They are offering a chance to meet the animals, feed a lamb, collect the eggs and generally have fun while learning where your food comes from. You can also buy the free range eggs, pork, lamb and beef which the students help to raise

For more information or directions- 01227 752778

Cooking @ Home



If you would like to improve your cooking skills, learn something new or just extend your cooking repertoire I am pleased to offer one to one cooking session in your own home.

I have been offering this service for over a year now and have found for some people it is an ideal way to learn.

Learning to cook in your own kitchen has several advantages,

- ✿ you learn to cook with your own equipment,
- ✿ you decide what time suits you and
- ✿ you choose what you want to cook.
- ✿

Some people already have basic skills and want to improve know while others have never cooked for themselves and want to start.

I offer very reasonable rates and if you want to include a friend to learn with you I can offer a good discount for two people.

t: 01622 727543 e: debs@debbiepryer.co.uk www.debbiepryer.co.uk

In Season this month

Spring cabbages bright, with crisp leaves

Purple sprouting broccoli its long, thin stems are tender and flavoursome,

Leeks, with a delicate flavour that richens and sweetens with cooking

Carrots tender young carrots are best eaten raw

Beetroot an earthy flavour and a good detoxifier

Radishes pungent, peppery and fiery and bitingly crisp

Rhubarb main crop, deep red, tinged with green. An intense flavour

Mussels, popular and fairly cheap.

Lobster delicate, with white, firm meat that is sweet and succulent at a very high price.

Parsley and Chives fresh looking, bright green bunches,

If you are in Faversham look out for Corinne's Creative Kitchen selling homemade curries using the finest quality and meats and vegetables, sourced from farms and farm shops within a 10 mile radius of Faversham.

And if you are traveling to Goudhurst, stop of at the Taywell Farmshop, to try out a new range of cheeses from a local producer. **The Kent Cheese Company.** The range includes hard and soft cheeses.

What to eat in March



Bright skies and the vibrancy of all things spring like welcomes the fresh new season produce for us to eat.

What could be better than to wake up your taste buds with the tartness of pale pink rhubarb? This fab 'fruit' teams up well with ginger, orange or vanilla. I'm sure I will be making a crumble for pudding on Sunday and I'll mix marmalade in with the fruit to give the orangey taste that I want. A modern twist with rhubarb is to cut it into pieces then roast it until soft and drizzle with honey. Serve with ginger ice cream and crisp biscuits for a posh desert. I will also make some Rhubarb jam. A bit of a work of art as I like to keep it clear and pale pink but whatever it looks like the taste is awesome.

Delightful stalks of purple sprouting broccoli will be making a welcome appearance. This veg can be used as an accompaniment to meat dishes or have a starring role in dishes such as stir fries. It goes really well with garlic, chilli, oyster and soy sauce. Purple sprouting also works with the punchy flavours of grilled salty bacon and strong parmesan cheese flakes. Serve topped with a fabulously rich poached duck egg.



Spring greens will be cooked swiftly to retain their bright green colour and then served with a creamy white fillet of cod. I may add some garlic, bacon and thyme to enhance the flavour. Whatever you do don't over cook your greens. Cook gently and with care.



Mussels are a favourite of mine and now is the right time to try something different. So instead of the usual white wine and cream, add some Thai flavouring including lemon grass, chilli, lime leaves, coriander, coconut milk and lime juice. I love these Asian flavours and seem to have become addicted to their clean, lively tastes. They are easy to bring together and can be used with a variety of different meat and fish including chicken and prawns.

When you need some help in the kitchen, give me a call.

I can help you to prepare the food for any event - from Children's birthday parties to family get tog ethers or a dinner party to impress. I can help with

- ideas and recipes on what to cook
- Preparing, presenting and serving the food
- Clearing away and washing up

To find out more or to make a booking please call or email

t: 01622 727543 e: debs@debbiepryer.co.uk www.debbiepryer.co.uk

Yummy Chocolate Easter Cake

You will need

2 tablespoons of cocoa
225g of butter
225g caster sugar
4 fresh free range eggs
300g of self raising flour and
3 tablespoons of marmalade

To make

Add a little boiling water to the cocoa powder and mix to a paste

Set the oven at 160C-Gas 3.

Cream the butter and sugar together (cream means beat together with a wooden spoon)

Add the cocoa and the marmalade, stir in.

Separate the eggs and add the yolks to the mix. (Put the whites in a dish and make sure you don't get any of the yolk in the whites)

Sieve and fold in the flour (sieving helps add air and will help the cake to rise, folding means using a metal spoon and a figure of eight pattern gently stir in the flour)

Whisk the egg whites and fold in gently (use an electric whisk if you have one)

Put the mix into a greased and lined 1 ½ inch cake tin. (Grease well and put greaseproof paper in the bottom to stop the cake from sticking in the tin)

Bake for around 60 – 75 mins

Test with a skewer to see if cooked.(stick the skewer in the cake, if it comes out with stick cake mix on it the cake is not cooked, when it comes out clean the cake is ready to come out of the oven)

Turnout on to a wire tray

Once cooled, decorate madly with chocolate butter cream or chocolate icing (made by heating 500ml double cream with 150g caster sugar then adding 180g good dark grated chocolate, (such as Green and Blacks or Divine) leave to cool and spread over the cake. mini eggs, chocolate buttons, chocolate bunnies, smarties etc



I'm really pleased to send you my newsletter and I hope you find the news and info interesting and useful. If you are no longer interested in receiving this type of information or have received it in error, please let me know and I will remove you from my list. I would also like to spread the word, so please feel free to pass this newsletter on to anyone who you feel would be interested in food news.