

Sweet Sussex recipes

If you have a sweet tooth then you will enjoy these classic Sussex recipes. Try them at the cottage or when you get home.

Sussex Pond Pudding

A Sussex Pond pudding has a steaming suet crust which encases a whole lemon with golden buttery sugar syrup. This syrup oozes onto the dish to form the 'pond'.

The lemon holds up the pudding and the lemon flavour filters into the sauce and the crust.

The following measures will serve 4-6:

250g self-raising flour
125g shredded beef suet or vegetable suet
150ml milk
300g unsalted butter, softened
200g soft light brown sugar
1 large lemon



You will need a 1½ litre pudding basin, some string and silver foil.

Mix the flour and suet together in a bowl. Mix into a dough with the milk. The dough should be soft but sufficiently firm to roll out into a circle large enough to line the pudding basin.

Cut a quarter segment out of the circle. This will mean that you can make a cone shape with the dough and it will fit more easily in the pudding basin. The leftover dough can be used for the lid. Put this slice of dough aside.

Butter the pudding basin well and drop the large piece of dough into it. Flatten it at the bottom, and join up the edges where the slice was taken out.

Mix the sugar and butter together and put it into the lined pudding basin.

Prick the lemon all over as much as you can with a roasting fork or skewer so that the juices can escape, then push it into the butter mixture.

Remould the pastry that was left for the lid and roll it out into a circle to fit the top of the pudding bowl. Lay it over the filling and press the edges of the dough together so that the filling is sealed in.

Take a piece of foil big enough to fit over the basin and with at least an extra 5cm all round. Make a pleat down the middle of the foil, place it over the top of the basin and tie in place with string round the top edge or like a parcel with a string handle so it can be lifted in and out of a saucepan.

Cooking with suet..

Beef suet currently has something of an image problem, and its use in pudding making is in danger of becoming a forgotten art.

In pastry, suet melts into the flour the way butter or lard does but it also adds a distinctive texture and flavour.

Vegetarian suet is fine for the Sussex pond pudding.

Bring a large pan half-filled with water to the boil and lower in the pudding. Cover and leave to simmer for 4 hours. Don't let the water stop boiling, and if the level drops lift up the basin and top up the pan with more boiling water.

To serve, lift out, remove the foil and loosen the sides with a small sharp knife. (It can be kept hot for another hour or so until it's needed.) Put a deep dish over the basin and quickly turn the whole thing upside down.

Watch the stream of fragrant, thick and golden liquid seep out of the pudding. Enjoy!

Ripe Tart

The name comes from the village of Ripe in the Sussex South Downs. In days gone by Ripe is where a pie feast was held to celebrate the cherry harvest.

The following measures will serve 8:

225g plain flour
25g cornflour
110g icing sugar plus 2 tsp
110g butter
1 egg yolk
450g cherries (stoned)
2 eggs
75g ground almonds
Almond essence - a few drops



Pre-heat oven to 200 °C / 400 °F / Gas 6.

Sift the flour, cornflour and 2 tsp icing sugar into a bowl.
Rub in the butter until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.

Add the egg yolk and 2 tablespoons cold water and stir to bind together. Knead lightly on a floured surface and roll out.

Use to line a 23 cm (9 inch) fluted flan tin.

Bake blind for 10-15 minutes, until set. Reduce oven temperature to 170 °C / 325 °F / Gas 3.

Arrange the cherries in flan case. Mix 110g (4 oz) icing sugar, eggs, almonds and essence, pour over the cherries.

Bake for 50-60 minutes, until the top is firm and golden. Serve hot or cold.

Sussex Plum Duffs

A very quick and tasty recipe that you don't need plum's for!

55g lard
2 cups of flour
55g currants or sultanas
27g castor sugar
1 cup of milk (soured)
Lemon

Sour the milk by adding the juice of half a lemon.

Rub the lard into the flour, add the fruit and sugar, and then the milk. Work the mixture into a pastry.

Roll out and cut into rounds, brush with milk, bake in a moderate oven for 15 minutes.