

Mushroom & Greens Stir-Fry

Stir-fry 2 sliced leeks or 200g sliced Brussels sprouts, and 1 bunch shredded baby bok choy in a little oil until a vibrant green. Add 250g sliced mushrooms and stir-fry until tender

and juicy. Season with oyster sauce or soy sauce. Great with instant noodles, also grilled or roasted chicken, pork or beef.

TIP To blanch vegetables — slice vegetables and place in heatproof bowl. Cover completely with boiling water and stand until slightly tender (30–60 seconds). Strain vegies and rinse in cold water to prevent further cooking.

Sizzling Skewers

Toss sliced capsicum, zucchini, leeks, small mushrooms, and cherry tomatoes in olive oil, minced garlic and sweet chilli sauce. Thread onto skewers and cook on hot barbecue or grill. Serve with barbecued chicken or lamb, or wrap in warmed mountain bread with houmous dip and salad.

TIP To ensure all vegetables cook at same time, blanch firm vegetables like zucchini and squash before threading onto skewers. (See tip for blanching)

TIP Blanch whole patty pan squash, toss with oil, garlic and chilli sauce and cook at same time as skewers.

Fruity Dippers with Choc Fudge Sauce

Thread slices of apple, pear, kiwi fruit, whole grapes and strawberries onto skewers. Break 125g cooking chocolate into microwave oven proof bowl. Cook uncovered until melted – cook on medium to high power for bursts of 30 seconds, stirring between bursts. Stir in 4 tablespoons cream and 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract and serve.

TIP Store unused sauce in fridge. To re-soften, heat gently in microwave 15–20 seconds, then stir.

APPLES AND PEARS

Pop apples and pears into lunchboxes, brief cases and handbags. They not only make great transportable snacks — they're also great sources of dietary fibre and vitamin C.

GRAPES

To prolong freshness, wash grapes just before using. To encourage family and friends to eat more fruit — snip grapes into neat bunches, and watch them disappear.

Creating

FRESH TASTES

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Tangy Beetroot Dip

Using blender or food processor, blend until smooth: 1 chopped cooked beetroot (see tip) 125g cream cheese, 1/4 white onion and 1/4 teaspoon Tabasco sauce. Serve with whole snow peas and radishes, and celery sticks with a difference.

TIP Remove stalks and finely slice Brussels sprouts. Rinse, shake dry and stir-fry until vibrant green. Season with a little sesame oil and pepper.

Creamy Capsicum Dip

Using a blender or food processor, blend 2 roasted red capsicums (see tip) with 125g cream cheese, 1/2 teaspoon minced garlic and Tabasco sauce to taste. Serve with carrot sticks, whole mushrooms and florets of blanched broccoli.

TIP To roast capsicum, cook skin side up under a hot grill until skin becomes blistered and charred. Pop in a paper bag until cool enough to handle, then slip the skins off.

Pesto Zucchini Dip

Steam 2 small sliced zucchinis until tender, about 10 minutes. Allow to cool. Using blender or food processor, blend zucchini with 1–2 tablespoons basil pesto sauce and 125g cream cheese. Serve with cauliflower florets, sliced capsicum and blanched sugar snap peas.

TIP To cook beetroot, trim stems to 2 cm, cover beetroot with water and boil until tender, about 45 minutes. Allow to cool. Using your hands, slip skins off.

Ruby Pears

Arrange peeled whole pears in saucepan. Cover with cranberry or apple and blackcurrant juice, and cook gently until tender, 10–15 minutes.

Remove pears and set aside. Bring juice to boil and boil until reduced by half. Spoon juice over pears and serve with thick cream and small clumps of red grapes (optional).

TIP When using large pears, cut in half lengthways and use a teaspoon to scoop cores neatly out of pear halves.



Honey Baked Apples

Serves 4

4 medium sized

Granny Smith apples

1/2 cup walnuts

3 tablespoons raisins

4 teaspoons brown sugar

3 tablespoons honey

Juice of 1/2 orange

1 cup grapes

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.

2. Remove cores from apples.

3. Finely chop 2 tablespoons of walnuts & combine with raisins & sugar. Stuff mixture into cavities of apples.

4. Arrange apples on a buttered ovenproof dish and bake until tender, 25–35 minutes.

5. Combine honey, walnuts and juice in small saucepan and heat gently 5 minutes. Remove pan from stove and stir in grapes.

6. Spoon sauce over apples and serve.



TIP Setting layers of jelly before adding grapes distributes grapes evenly through jelly.



TIP Roasted vegetables make great pizza toppings. They're also delicious added to risottos and soups towards the end of cooking for extra flavour, vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre.



Grape Studded Jelly

Serves 4-6

3 cups white grape juice

3 tablespoons sugar

5 teaspoons gelatine

2 cups grapes

1. Place 1 cup grape juice and sugar in saucepan. Sprinkle with gelatine and allow to stand 2 minutes.

2. Stir mixture over low heat until gelatine dissolves (do not boil). Remove from heat and stir in remaining grape juice.

3. Pour 1/3 jelly into serving bowls or glasses. Chill until set. Top with half grapes and half remaining jelly. Chill until set. Top with remaining grapes and jelly and chill until needed.

TIP For adults, try replacing grape juice with sweet white wine.

Pesto Vegetable Roast

Serves 4

8 small potatoes, scrubbed or peeled, and halved

1 capsicum, seeds removed, sliced thickly

4 small (or 2 medium sized) zucchini, sliced thickly

4 Roma tomatoes, halved lengthways

1 tablespoon pesto sauce

1 tablespoon olive oil

1/2 small cauliflower, cut into 8

1/2 cup grated cheese

TIP Toss chicken drumsticks in a little pesto and oil; add to oven at same time as potatoes.

Basil Pesto

Using a food processor, process leaves of 1 bunch sweet basil, 6 peeled cloves garlic, 1/2 cup olive oil, 1/4 cup pine nuts (or hazel nuts or walnuts), with salt and freshly ground pepper to taste. Use at once or store in screw top jar in fridge for 7–10 days.

Veggie Toppers

Brush sliced pumpkin, zucchini, capsicum, mushrooms and halved tomatoes with olive oil, crushed garlic and pepper. Arrange pumpkin on tray and cook at 200°C 10 minutes. Add remaining vegetables and cook 15 minutes. Arrange sliced bread stick on tray, brush with olive oil and cook 5 minutes. Pile vegies onto bread with fresh basil or parsley.

TIP For an extra flavour burst, brush sliced bread stick with basil or sun-dried tomato pesto sauce instead of oil.

1. Preheat oven to 200°C.

2. Toss potatoes, capsicum, zucchini and tomatoes in pesto and olive oil.

3. Arrange potatoes on baking tray and cook 20 minutes.

4. Steam cauliflower until almost tender. Arrange next to potatoes, sprinkle with cheese and return to oven.

5. Arrange capsicum, zucchini and tomatoes on baking tray. Cook until golden brown and tender, about 15 minutes.

TIP When supplies of fresh basil are abundant, make plenty of pesto and store in ice cube trays in the freezer to ensure a ready supply in the cooler months.

Chilli Vegetable Stir-Fry

Serves 4

1 tablespoon oil

1 onion, sliced

2 carrots, sliced

2 capsicums, seeds removed, sliced

125g red cabbage, sliced finely

2 cups broccoli florets

125g snow peas

1 tablespoon sweet chilli sauce

1 teaspoon sesame oil

1 cup roasted cashews

1. Heat oil in wok and stir-fry onion and carrot over high heat 2–3 minutes.

2. Add capsicum, cabbage, broccoli and snow peas and stir-fry until just tender.

3. Stir in sweet chilli sauce and sprinkle with sesame oil.

4. Scatter with cashews and serve with rice or noodles.

TIP For a chicken stir-fry, add 2 thinly sliced chicken fillets at same time as onion and carrot.

