

From palette to plate



JEAN-BAPTISTE-SIMEON CHARDIN, COPPER CAULDRON WITH THREE EGGS, C.1734, OIL ON PANEL, 12 X 21CM, LOUVRE, PARIS

Copper Cauldron with Three Eggs

Jean-Siméon Chardin is an 18th-century French artist notable for his still lifes and interiors. He painted his subjects true to life in a quiet simplicity that was in direct contrast to the opulent extravagance of his Rococo contemporaries. Stylistically, Chardin mirrored his work on that of the 17th-century Dutch artists and enjoyed immediate success after his acceptance to the French Academy in 1728. In Still Life, the objects on the table are softly lit with thick impasto paint which marked a stark contrast to the smooth translucent layers of paint and spot-lit ingredients by the Dutch artists Chardin regarded. As an artist, his pure painting influenced the work of Cezanne, Manet, Braque and Matisse who copied many of his paintings at the Louvre.

Egg dishes can be injected with a dose of creativity as presented in this galette recipe. In France, a galette can be made either sweet

or savoury with ham, eggs and cheese, otherwise known as a galette complète. Typically, the crust is made with plenty of butter so when it is baked, it becomes flaky and extra crusty. The flavours of the eggs galette à la Mexicana are inspired by the Mexican classic, huevos rancheros. Traditionally, the eggs are cracked into a bubbling mixture of tomato, chilli and pepper and cooked until soft. The egg and tomatoes are then scooped into a tortilla and eaten like a burrito with a bit of cheese. In my recipe, I swapped around the assembly order and traded the tortilla for some pastry. Cooking my eggs with the chilli and spring onion softens the sharp flavours and the entire dish is brightened with a sprinkling of coriander and a squeeze of lime. The galette is wonderful when served with sliced tomato and avocado, sprinkled with salt, and a few dashes of hot sauce.

Discover the delicious side of still life painting with this spread by Sydney-based art historian Megan Fizell. She tells us the stories behind these visual artworks by famous painters and shares her eye-catching recipes inspired by their food-based masterpieces.



EGGS GALETTE À LA MEXICANA

SERVES 4

- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry, thawed
 - 1/2 cup cheddar cheese, grated
 - 4 large eggs
 - 2 spring onions, chopped
 - 1 red chilli, thinly sliced
 - a small handful coriander, chopped, reserve extra for garnish
 - 1 lime, quartered
1. Preheat the oven to 220°C. Roll out the puff pastry and fold in the edges about 1 inch. Place on baking tray and prick the base of the pastry all over with a fork. Bake in the oven for 7 mins.
 2. Remove the pastry from the oven and sprinkle cheddar cheese over the base. Crack the eggs onto the pastry and sprinkle spring onion and red chilli on top of the eggs.
 3. Place it in the oven for another 5 to 7 mins until the egg whites have set (you will know that they are set when they no longer wobble when you give the pan a shake). Remove from oven, cut galette into four portions, scatter the coriander over the eggs and finish with a squeeze of fresh lime.

tip | The berry compote is wonderful spooned over ice cream or mixed with granola and yoghurt for a tasty and healthy breakfast.



OSIAS BEERT, STILL-LIFE WITH CHERRIES AND STRAWBERRIES IN CHINA BOWLS, 1608, OIL ON COPPER, 50 X 66 CM, STAATLICHE MUSEEN, BERLIN

Still-Life with Cherries and Strawberries

The Baroque Flemish painter Osias Beert is known for his still life paintings of flowers and breakfast scenes. The breakfast pieces are commonly known by their Dutch name ontbijtjes which translates to little breakfasts. These works are characterised by their high vantage point where the viewer is looking down at the scene and this forced perspective is often found in all Dutch still life paintings in the early 17th century. Dutch still life paintings are often difficult for a modern viewer to properly read because they are full of symbols. According to Norbert Schneider in his book *Still Life (Big Art)*, Osias Beert shows the forces of good and evil fighting for man's soul in the form of animals. The human soul is represented by strawberries and

cherries, which were considered to be fruits of Paradise.

Red fruits like cherries and strawberries add a vibrant colour and taste to pastries such as this vlaai recipe. Originally created in Weert, Limburg, vlaai is a pie made of pastry and filling. Traditionally found in the southern parts of the Netherlands, it is commonly eaten during 'koffietijd' (coffee time) between 10 and 11am or 7 and 8pm. During koffietijd, one would eat a biscuit or cake with their coffee depending on the region. The Protestant North is known for only having one biscuit per cup of coffee and in the south, the Catholics have the sweet cakes cut into eight sections to share with family and friends.



VLAAI WITH BERRY COMPOTE

SERVES 6

4 cups flour
a pinch of salt
1 cup of milk
2 Tbsp active dry yeast
1 large egg
1/2 cup melted butter
1/2 cup sugar
3 cups berry compote **

1. Sift the flour with a pinch of salt into a large mixing bowl. Warm the milk and mix with the yeast in a small bowl. Leave in a warm place uncovered until it is frothy. Make a hollow in the flour and pour in the yeast. Mix well. Beat the egg and add to

the flour mixture along with the melted butter and sugar. Knead to a soft dough that is ready when it comes away from the sides of the bowl.

2. Shape the dough into a ball and cover the bowl with a damp cloth. Let sit for 1 hour in a warm place until the dough is well risen. Preheat the oven to 230°C.
3. Grease a large, flat flan tin. Knead the risen dough and use it to line the tin. Roll out the remaining dough and cut into strips to create the lattice work on top of the vlaai. Put the compote into the tin and lay the strips of dough over the top. Pinch the ends of the dough to the edges of the crust.
4. Bake for 15-25 mins in the centre of the oven. Let cool on a wire tray and serve with ice cream or whipped cream.

BERRY COMPOTE **

1 punnet of strawberries
1 punnet of cherries, pitted
1/2 cup sugar
1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
2 Tbsp cornflour

1. Divide the strawberries and cherries in half. Take one half of the strawberries, quarter them and set aside. Mash the other half of the strawberries and pitted cherries in a large bowl with the back of a fork. Add the sugar to the mixture and mix until it has dissolved.
2. Put into a large saucepan over medium high heat and bring to a boil. Boil and stir for 2 mins. Mix in quartered strawberries and serve.



PAUL CÉZANNE, *STILL LIFE WITH PLATE OF CHERRIES*, 1885-87, OIL ON CANVAS, 58.1 X 68.8 CM, LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

Still Life with Plate of Cherries

Paul Cézanne's *Still Life with Plate of Cherries* took over two years to complete and with just a cursory glance, one can notice that the scene is not quite right – it takes a hard look to spot the incongruities. The back edge of the table doesn't line up and the perspective of the side-by-side plates is different. It complicates the viewer's entrance into the space and places all of the importance on the fruit subjects. The white plates seem to frame the fruit and draw the viewer's eye immediately to the centre of the canvas. Cézanne often painted objects from the earth and homemade works (pots, bottles, and floral fabrics) from his

home in Provence. Like the way Cézanne highlights the fresh fruit in his painting, the cherries and nectarines are the focal point of the clafoutis inspired by the painting.

Clafoutis is always made with cherries and when substitutions are made for other berries it is commonly called flognarde. It is a custard-like dish made by baking fresh fruit in a batter in a baking dish. The batter is similar to that of pancakes and to stay in line with the traditional recipe, the cherries are not to be de-pitted because it causes them to lose flavour.



CHERRY & NECTARINE CLAFOUTIS

SERVES 6

1 tsp butter
500 g cherries
2-3 nectarines, halved, pitted and cut into wedges
3/4 cup double cream
1/2 tsp vanilla extract
1/2 cup milk
3 eggs
1/4 cup caster sugar
2/3 cup plain flour
 icing sugar

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Use butter to grease a 23-cm round baking dish and put the nectarine wedges and cherries in a single layer on the bottom.
2. Put the cream in a small saucepan and add the vanilla essence. Gently heat for a few minutes and remove from the heat, add the milk and cool.
3. Whisk the eggs with the sugar and flour, then stir into the cream. Pour into the greased round baking dish over the fruit and bake for 30-35 mins, or until golden on the top. Dust with icing sugar and serve.

tip | Substitute the vanilla extract with almond extract to give your clafoutis a different flavour.



NORA HEYSEN, CORN COBS, 1938, OIL ON CANVAS, 40.5 X 51.3 CM, ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Corn Cobs

Nora Heysen was the very first woman to win the Archibald Prize for portraiture and was the first woman in Australia to garner an official war artist appointment. She studied at the Central School of Art in London where her appreciation for the work by Pissarro and Cézanne transformed her classical style into a soft painterly mode of representation with free use of colour. *Corn Cobs* demonstrates influences of Post-Impressionist art, which Heysen would have viewed during her European travels, apparent through the thick handling of the paint and short, visible brushstrokes. She particularly admired the art by Van Gogh but it was Fantin-Latour who informed her earlier still life aesthetic.

A versatile ingredient, corn lends a sweet burst of flavour and pleasant crunch to any dish including fritters. A fritter can be classified as an ingredient coated in batter and deep-fried. In my kitchen, it typically forms a rough patty, lightly fried in a skillet with a number of ingredients still visible through the crusted batter coating. According to the online etymology dictionary, the noun, not the verb, is derived from the 14th century Old French verb *friture* meaning something fried which in turn is from the Late Latin *frictura*, a frying. These fritters are a healthy addition to a picnic hamper or by reducing the size of the fritters, the recipe can be adapted to make a bite-sized appetiser for a summer dinner party.



CORN FRITTERS WITH ROASTED PEPPERS, CILANTRO AND FETA

MAKES 12

- 1 cup corn
- 1/4 cup roasted peppers, diced
- 1/2 cup coriander, chopped, reserve extra for garnish
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 stalk spring onion, chopped
- a pinch of salt
- a pinch of dried chilli flakes
- 1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 cup semolina
- 1/4 cup feta, crumbled
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 fresh lime, cut in wedges

1. Mix the corn, roasted peppers, coriander, cumin, spring onion, salt, chilli flakes and pepper in a large bowl.
2. In a separate bowl, beat the two eggs. Mix into the corn mixture and stir in the semolina. Crumble the feta into the mixture and carefully stir until all of the ingredients are incorporated.
3. Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan over medium high heat. Drop 3 Tbsp of the batter into the pan. Cook slowly and flip once the fritter becomes crisp and golden, around 2 to 3 mins. Once cooked through, about an additional 1 to 2 mins,

tips | To remove corn off the cob, hold the cob firmly and use a sharp knife to make long vertical strokes to separate the kernels

remove from the heat and place on a large plate. Cover with aluminum foil to keep warm and repeat with remaining batter until all fritters are complete. Serve with lime and garnish with extra coriander. 🍋