

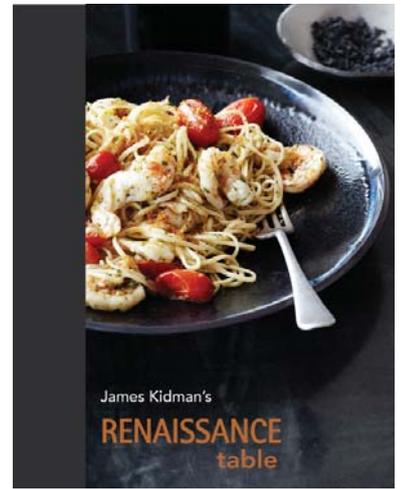
I have selected a number of recipes that I feel are approachable, contain interesting ingredients, and have great flavour. While some are based on classical Italian dishes, others are simply inspired by Italy and the values of Italian hospitality; nourishment, substance, simplicity, respect for ingredients and regional personality. No single part of any recipe is overly difficult and all are achievable by the home cook.

Some recipes certainly need time and certain ingredients will take an amount of searching. Enjoy the 'hunt'. I am sure you will get the right ingredients and produce with help from your local suppliers. I have always found that when you ask or hunt for something special, a bit off the beaten track, you are likely to find people who are like-minded, appreciate your search, and are happy to help.

James Kidman

James Kidman's Renaissance Table published by National Gallery of Australia RRP \$59.95

Photography: Sharyn Cairns



Warm beetroot salad

Serves 4

1 bunch baby beetroot (about 10 beets)
 1 litre water
 100 ml red wine vinegar
 75 g brown sugar
 1 teaspoon white peppercorns
 1 teaspoon coriander seeds
 peel of 1 orange
 2 sprigs thyme
 1 star anise
 1 cinnamon stick

To serve

1 tablespoon pine nuts, toasted
 10 beetroot leaves
 50 ml extra virgin olive oil
 20 ml red wine vinegar
 salt

For the beetroot

Trim the beetroot of excess stalk, leaving just 1 cm. Place in a heavy-based saucepan and cover with water. Add the rest of the ingredients to the saucepan and bring to a boil slowly. Reduce the heat to a very gentle simmer and cook the beetroot until tender (a knife goes easily into the middle).

Remove the beetroot from the cooking liquid. Allow to cool slightly and peel off the skins, being careful to leave the stalks on. Cut in half lengthways.

To serve

In a frypan warm the extra virgin olive oil, add the beetroot, red wine vinegar, beetroot leaves and pine nuts. Gently warm through, allowing the leaves to just wilt. Season with salt and serve.



Calf's liver with onion cream and bacon

Serves 4

½ calf's liver
4 long rashers bacon

Onion cream

4 brown onions, julienned
50 ml extra virgin olive oil
50 g unsalted butter
150 ml cream
sea salt to taste

Eschalots

6 golden eschalots, finely sliced into rings
50 g plain flour
200 ml olive oil

To serve

20 watercress sprigs
70 ml veal sauce
extra virgin olive oil to drizzle

For the liver

Peel the membrane from the liver and cut it across into slices 1 cm thick.

For the onion cream

In a heavy-based frypan melt the butter with the olive oil and add the onions. Cook the onions on a low heat until caramelised and sweet. Add the cream and cook for 5 minutes on a low heat. Puree in a blender until smooth. Season with salt and keep warm.

For the eschalots

Toss the eschalot rings in flour to coat. Bring the oil to 140°C in a deep heavy-based saucepan. Place the eschalots in and cook until golden. Remove and drain on absorbent paper.

To serve

Preheat oven to 180°C. In a frypan heat some olive oil, seal the sliced liver, place on an oven tray and cook for 2 minutes in the preheated oven. Cook the bacon rashers in a frypan until golden. Spoon 2 tablespoons of onion cream onto each plate. Place 2 or 3 slices of liver on each plate, then place the bacon on top of the liver. Toss the eschalot rings and watercress together with a little olive oil and place on top of the liver. Serve with veal sauce and drizzle with olive oil.



Veal Sauce

Makes 500ml

1 quantity (3 litres) veal stock
50ml olive oil
1 onion, finely diced
200g button mushrooms
1 tablespoon dried porcini mushrooms
200ml madeira
1 cinnamon stick
1 tablespoon black peppercorns
1 star anise
1 tablespoon juniper berries

Saute the onion in a little olive oil. Add the mushrooms and porcini and cook for a further 5 minutes on a gentle heat. Add the madeira and reduce by three quarters. Add the veal stock and reduce to sauce consistency. In the last half hour add the spices. Strain through a fine cloth. Use immediately.

Veal Stock

Makes 3 litres

5kg veal bones
2 brown onions, roughly chopped
5 carrots, roughly chopped
5 sticks celery, roughly chopped
3 leeks, roughly chopped
6 ripe tomatoes
200g mushrooms
½ bunch thyme
500ml red wine
5 litres of water

Preheat oven to 180°C. Roast the bones for half an hour or until brown.

Saute the vegetables in a large saucepan until golden and caramelised. Add the wine and reduce by two-thirds. Add the bones and thyme, cover with water. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat immediately to a very gentle simmer. Skim off any impurities or fat that rises to the surface. Simmer for 4 hours. strain through a fine sieve. The stock will store in the refrigerator for up to 4 days or frozen for up to one month.

Pear tart with pear sorbet

Serves 6

1 sheet puff pastry
9 medium Beurre Bosc pears, firm ripe
100 ml pear poaching liquid

Pastry cream

400 ml milk
100 ml cream
50 g sugar
5 egg yolks
50 g plain flour
1 vanilla pod, split lengthways

This is great in winter. In summer try peaches or even apples. You could use vanilla icecream instead of the sorbet. If you don't have a 17 cm cutter you can use a smaller one and just reduce the number of pears.

For the tart

Roll out puff pastry to 2 mm thickness and place in the freezer for a few minutes. Allow the pastry to become firm but not hard. Remove from the freezer and using a 17 cm cutter cut six discs. Dot the discs with a fork, leaving only a 5 mm rim unmarked.

Preheat oven to 180°C. Using a small palette knife or the back of a spoon, smear an even covering of pastry cream over the pastry discs, leaving the rim clear. Quarter the pears, leave skin on and remove the cores. Slice the quarters finely and fan around the outside of the pastry discs. Brush the pears with the reserved pear poaching liquid from the sorbet. Bake in the preheated oven for 10 minutes or until the pastry is golden.



For the pastry cream

Whisk the sugar, egg yolks and flour together. Bring the milk and cream to a boil with the vanilla pod. Remove from the heat, remove the vanilla pod, pour half of the milk and cream over the eggs. Mix and, once combined, incorporate the rest. Place the mixture into a saucepan and cook for 5 minutes over gentle heat until thick. Julienne the vanilla pod into slivers, dry in a warm oven (approximately 90°C) and retain.

To serve

Serve the tarts warm with a scoop of pear sorbet and garnish with a sliver of dried vanilla pod.

For the pear sorbet

8 Beurre Bosc pears, peeled
700 ml sugar syrup
1 vanilla pod, split
50 ml Poire William liqueur

Place the whole peeled pears in a saucepan, cover with the sugar syrup and add the vanilla pod. Bring to a gentle boil, then simmer until the pears are tender. Remove from the heat and allow to cool in the liquid. Remove the pears and cut out the cores, discarding any seeds. Purée the flesh and pass through a fine sieve. It should make approximately 500 ml. Add 500 ml of the poaching liquid to the pear purée and add the Poire William liqueur. Allow to cool and churn in an icecream machine.