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Spread the cherry cheer

These versatile summer staples shine brightly by letting their flavour flow.



**Jeremy and
Jane Strode**

THERE are a few ingredients that herald the beginning of a long, hot summer but none more delightfully than cherries. I love a bowl of them on the dining room table or in the kitchen — they not only look beautiful but make a wonderful snack.

They are an ancient fruit that originated in western Asia and south-eastern Europe and fall into three main groups: sweet cherries, sour cherries and a mix of both. Sweet cherries come in many varieties; sour cherries are less common but if you can find them, they are superior to cook with.

The season runs from October until February, peaking in mid-

summer. Select cherries with the stalks intact and with shiny skins. Dull skin means the cherries are overripe.

They excite us cooks because of their versatility.

Apart from being great eaten raw, of course, they make

wonderful preserves, are lovely with duck and game, perfect pickled and served with pates and rillettes and can be lightly poached with a little sugar and spices for myriad desserts.

These recipes use one of my favourite fruits at a favourite time of year.

**JEREMY STRODE
PICTURES: JENNIFER SOO**



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Chocolate and cherry tart

This tart will last three to four days out of the fridge in a cool place but is incredible while still warm from the oven

INGREDIENTS

- 300g savoury shortcrust pastry
- 420g dark chocolate
- 280g butter
- 3 eggs
- 5 egg yolks
- 90g castor sugar
- 200g cherries, pits removed

METHOD

- Roll pastry to half-centimetre thickness and line a 23-centimetre tart shell. Rest overnight or for at least one hour. Preheat oven to 160C.
- Blind-bake tart shell until pastry is cooked, about 25 minutes. Turn oven down to 140C. Gently melt chocolate and butter and stir to combine well.
- Place eggs, yolks and sugar in a mixer and whisk on high until light and fluffy.
- Fold through chocolate until completely combined. Place cherries in the bottom of the tart shell, pour over the chocolate mix and bake until risen in the centre, about 45 minutes.
- Remove to a cooling rack and serve warm or at room temperature with cream or ice-cream.

Serves 8



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Spiced cherries and brioche toastie

Buy brioche from the deli, food store or department stores. Otherwise, it is very rewarding to make it yourself — the house will smell delicious.

INGREDIENTS

300g cherries, pits removed
2 star anise
4 cloves
1 tsp black peppercorns
1 tbsp castor sugar
3 tbsp water
8 slices brioche
200g Nutella

METHOD

- Place cherries, star anise, cloves, peppercorns sugar and water in a saucepan. Cover with a lid and place on a medium heat for five minutes. Keep the lid on and pick up the saucepan and move around to gently coat cherries in the syrup. Stand for 10 minutes.
- Preheat a sandwich press. Spread four slices of brioche with Nutella, top with remaining brioche and place in sandwich press until golden. If you don't have a press, toast brioche and then spread with Nutella before pressing together.
- Cut in half on an angle and serve with warm cherries and their syrup.

Serves 4



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Chicken liver parfait and pickled cherries

Choose cherries with the stalks intact: it not only indicates quality but they look great when ready to serve

INGREDIENTS

500g cherries, washed	150g butter
400g castor sugar	150g pork fat
450g white wine vinegar	450g cream
12 black peppercorns	salt
6 cloves	finely ground white pepper
4 bay leaves	100ml brandy
450g chicken livers, trimmed	400ml veal stock
1 tbsp brandy	2 egg whites
1 tbsp port	½ tsp powdered gelatine

METHOD

- To pickle the cherries, place them with sugar, vinegar, peppercorns, cloves and bay leaves in a saucepan. Bring to the boil, simmer for five minutes.
- Allow liquor to cool. Pack sterilised preserving jars with cherries and cover with pickling liquor. Seal jars and refrigerate for one month before using.
- To make the parfait the night before, marinate the livers in brandy and port. Preheat oven to 140C. Melt the butter and pork fat together in a saucepan and allow to cool to blood temperature.
- Warm cream to blood temperature. Blend livers in a bar blender, add butter and pork fat with blender going. Add cream and season with salt and pepper with blender going.
- Pass through a fine strainer and pour into a 1.5-litre terrine mould or six 200-millilitre ramekins and place in a baking tray. Fill tray with hot water from the tap so the water comes halfway up the moulds and cover tray with foil. Bake in the oven for 20 minutes for a large parfait or eight minutes for individual. Parfaits should still be wobbly in the centre. Refrigerate.
- To make the jelly, reduce brandy by half in a saucepan. Add stock and reduce to 250 millilitres. Allow to cool.
- Lightly whisk egg whites and stir through chilled stock. Bring to the boil in a saucepan, stirring occasionally. Once stock has just boiled, do not stir again and then reduce



- heat to a very slow simmer for 10 minutes.
- Strain clear jelly through a fine strainer — try to avoid disturbing egg whites. Stir through gelatine that has been dissolved in one tablespoon of warm water while jelly is hot.
- When cool, pour a thin layer on top of parfait and set in the fridge. Serve with crusty bread or toast.

Serves 6