

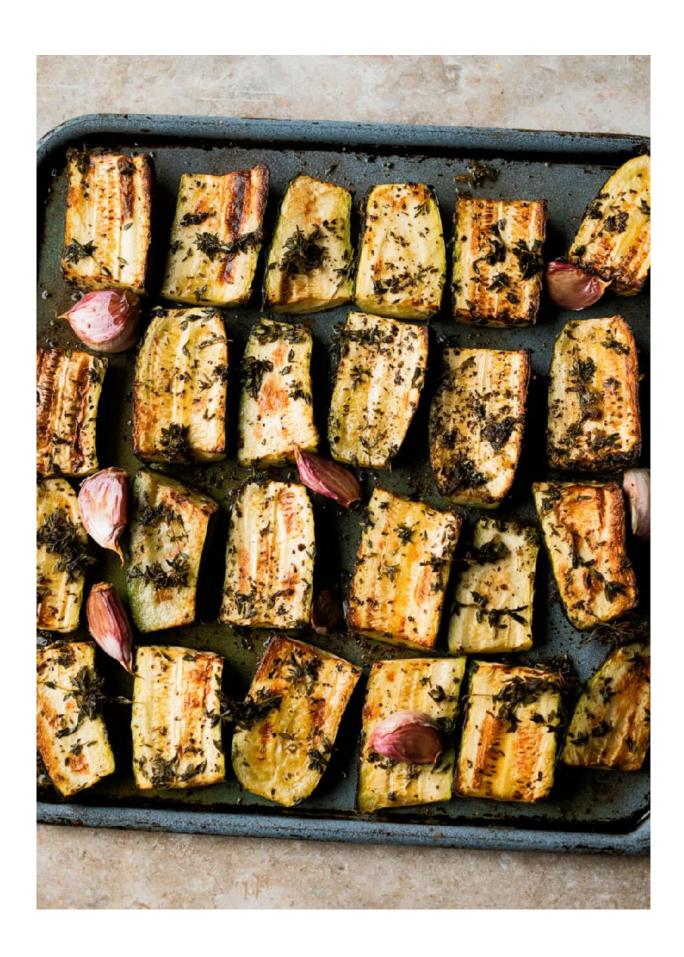
SIMPLE

A Cookbook

Yotam Ottolenghi with Tara Wigley and Esme Howarth

Photographs by Jonathan Lovekin





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Introduction: Ottolenghi 💿 🕕 🔟 🕩

There are al sorts of ways to get a meal on the table, depending on the sort of cook you are. One person's idea of cooking simply is the next person's culinary nightmare. For me, for example, it's about being able to stop at my grocery store on the way home, pick up a couple of things that look good and make something within 20 or 30 minutes of getting home. My husband, Karl, on the other hand, has a completely different idea of what "simple cooking" is. If we're having friends over on the weekend, he'l want to spend a good amount of time beforehand, prepping and cooking as much as he can so that very little needs to be done when our guests are around. There are other ways, too. Esme, who led the recipe testing for this book, prefers to be in the garden on the weekend rather than kitchen-bound. Her idea of simple cooking is to put something in the oven on a Saturday morning and leave it simmering away, ready to be eaten four or five hours later. Tara, on the other hand, who led the writing, can't real y relax without knowing that a meal is basical y ready a ful day before it's due to be eaten. Sauces are in the fridge, stews are in the freezer, veggies are blanched or roasted and ready.

Whatever our approach, it al looks effortless and easy when friends and family come to eat in our respective kitchens. This is only because we've worked out the way that suits us to make cooking simple, relaxing and therefore fun. It's different for everyone. This idea, then—that there's more than one way to get a meal on the table and that everyone has a different idea of which way is simple—is what Ottolenghi SIMPLE is al about.

And, no, for anyone wondering, Ottolenghi SIMPLE is not a contradiction in terms! I know, I know: I've seen the raised eyebrows, I've heard the jokes. The one about the reader who thought there was part of a recipe missing as they already had all the ingredients they needed in their cupboard. Or the one that goes, "Just popping out to the local shop to buy the papers, milk, black garlic, and sumac!"

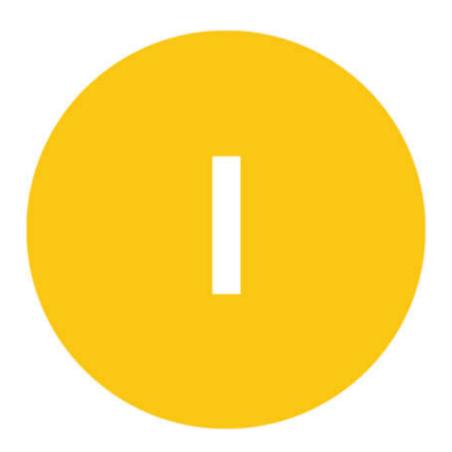
I hold up my hands, absolutely. There have been lists to make and ingredients to find but, truthful y, there's not a recipe to my name that I feel sheepish about. Cooking, for me, has always been about abundance, bounty, freshness, and surprise. Four big words to expect from a plate of food, so a single sprig of parsley was never, real y, going to cut the mustard. The reason

I'm so excited about Ottolenghi SIMPLE is that it's ful of recipes that are stil distinctly "Ottolenghi" but are simple in at least one (but very often in more than one) way.

To build on the different definitions of simplicity for different people, Tara

devised a clear and practical color-coded system. The beauty of Tara's system is that it allows you, once you've figured out what kind of "simple cook" you are and for what kind of "simple occasion" you are cooking, to select the recipes that are right for you. Those bright colors are really there to help you plan meals and then make them, with minimum hassle and maximum joy.





short on time

With your ingredients in the house, your knife sharp, the oven on and the decks clear, these recipes wil take less than 30 minutes to get on the table. Noodles and pasta dishes come into their own, with their short cooking time, as does fish, which is so often quick to cook. Meat can be speedy as wel, though, with things like lamb patties and chicken schnitzel needing very little time in the pan. Raw vegetable recipes wil nearly always be quick to make, as are half the brunch dishes, which is

what you want when cooking in the morning.

The short-on-time recipes are the ones I eat for supper during the week and the recipes I feed friends for brunch on the weekend. They're the dishes that can be made so quickly and easily that, sometimes, I end up making five or six at once so that my plans for a simple meal turn, inadvertently, into a big feast.

10 ingredients or less

I thought that imposing a limit of 10 ingredients or less on my recipes was going to be a big chal enge, but it was actual y the biggest thril. The temptation to add layer upon layer of flavor and texture is one I often happily fal for, but knowing that I couldn't do that here was a form of liberation.

The most thril ing thing of al, though, was the achievement of this for so many recipes without ever thinking that a recipe was in any way lacking. I can't see myself becoming a herb apologist in the future (green things make me happy!) and there's never a dish I regret squeezing lemon over—but, absolutely, less can be

more and abundance can stil be achieved with fewer ingredients.

So what have I left out that might have otherwise been there? One or two different herbs are used instead of three or four, for example. One type of oil or salt or variety of chile was shown to be enough. Some readymade spice mixes—such as curry powder or Chinese 5spice powder—were a great alternative to grinding and combining a host of individual spices. A dish was bold enough not to need the teaspoon of sugar, clove of garlic, or half teaspoon of dried mint or tomato paste I might have otherwise added. Rather than using vinegar and lemon, I'd use just one and increase the amount. With the exception of harissa, though—one of my absolute pantry must-haves—and one recipe that has a tablespoon of sriracha in its dressing (see the prawn recipe on this page), I decided not to rely on readymade chile pastes, such as Thai green or red curry pastes. There are some real y good pastes available but, as freshness is so important to me, I'd rather make a

simple quick curry paste of my own, using a few key



ingredients, than use an ingredient-packed ready-made version.

Ingredients I haven't included in the number count are: salt, pepper, water, olive oil and—in a handful of recipes—garlic and onion.

make ahead

Ottolenghi food is al about freshness. Herbs and leaves don't like to sit around after they've been chopped or dressed. A lot of baked things like to be eaten soon after

they come out of the oven. There are al sorts of ways, though, to get ahead with the meal you're making without compromising on how fresh it is.

Many things, such as spreads and sauces, dips, and dressings, for example, are happy to be made a day or two ahead and kept in the fridge, ready to be warmed through or brought back to room temperature before serving. The freezer is also your friend. It's often as easy to double the amount of a pasta sauce or stew that a recipe cal s for, for example, as it is to make the amount you need for one meal. That way you can just freeze half, have your next meal ready and waiting, and feel disproportionately pleased with yourself in the process. It's not just about getting food into the fridge or freezer the day or week before, though. Making ahead also includes al the ways you can get ahead by a few hours on the day you're prepping for a meal, so that a dish is ready to be assembled when it's time to eat. Nuts can be toasted, batter mixed, stuffing prepped, grains cooked and refreshed, vegetables blanched and dried,

or even (in the case of wedges of eggplant or squash) roasted in the oven and brought to room temperature. These are al things that can be done hours (or even the day) before. Herbs might not like to be chopped but the leaves can certainly be picked from the stems in advance. Just cover them with a slightly damp paper towel and keep them in the fridge, unchopped. With meat, a lot can be done in advance. Meatbal s can be made up and rol ed (ready to be cooked when needed) or even seared in advance (ready to be warmed through before serving). Chicken thighs or beef sirloin can be marinating a day or two ahead of when you're ready to cook. Slow-cooked stews can be made a day or two ahead and then, again, warmed through before serving.

Desserts, as wel, can very often be made ahead. Ice creams sit happily in the freezer, many cakes and most cookies keep wel in an airtight container, and fridge cakes take up residence in, wel, the fridge. Other times it's about elements that can al be made in advance,

ready to be put together before serving (the cherries and crumble and cheesecake, for example, in the cheesecake on this page), leaving a minute's worth of



assembly to do before a knockout dessert is brought to the table.

The joy of make-ahead recipes is that, with the knowledge that most of the work is done, you can then actual y be in the moment when it comes to serving and enjoying a meal. Having friends and family over is as much about hanging out together as the food that you

eat, and there shouldn't be a big gap between the relaxed fun of planning a meal and the reality of making it happen. People don't go to their friends' house expecting food to be served à la minute and checked at the pass. That is what restaurants are for. If you're someone who likes to plan and get ahead, don't turn into a crazy-person chef the night your friends are coming over for supper.

pantry

What people have in their cupboard depends, obviously, on what they like to cook and eat. The fact that my cupboard shelves are always home to a tub of tahini, some green tea, and dark chocolate does not, I know, mean that anyone else's are going to be.

That being said, there are a few things I've assumed you wil have on hand. If a recipe relies on them, then it wil be seen as pantry-led. These everyday ingredients are: everyday ingredients

Olive oil

Unsalted butter

All-purpose flour Large eggs Garlic Onions Lemons Greek-style yogurt Parmesan (or pecorino) Herbs Dried pasta Rice Canned beans (lentils, chickpeas, lima beans) Canned tuna and anchovies Salt and pepper You might stil have to pick something up—a piece of fresh cod, for example, for the dish of chickpeas with

flaked cod_(this page) or some spinach leaves for the

able to stop by just one shop on the way home rather

than have to write a long list or go out of your way.

As wel as these everyday ingredients, there are 10

gigli pasta (this page)—but my thinking is that you'l be

"Ottolenghi" ingredients I'm assuming you won't have in your cupboard already, which I'm urging you to go out and buy. Simple cooking is often about injecting as much flavor as possible into a dish in a way that is quick and easy. These are some of my favorite little flavor bombs to help you to do that. They all have a long shelf life and are used again and again throughout the book.

"Ottolenghi" ingredients

Sumac

Za'atar

Urfa chile flakes

Ground cardamom

Pomegranate molasses

Rose harissa

Tahini

Barberries

Black garlic

Preserved lemons

For more on what these ingredients are, where to find the best version of them, and why they're so good to have in the cupboard, see this page.

What you have in your cupboard changes, of course, according to the season. A dish of roasted mushrooms and chestnuts (this page) is something you'l be able to magic up around Christmas in a way that you couldn't in the less festive months.

Pantry recipes are also meant to be versatile. My fridgeraid salad dressing (this page), for example, uses the
herbs that needed to be used up when making the
recipe, but it's going to work as wel without the
tarragon and with a bit more basil, if that's what you
have. The chocolate fridge cake (this page) is about as
robust as a dessert can be. I've suggested the dried fruit,
chocolate flavor, and alcohol I like to add to the mix, but
start with what you have in your cupboard and take it
from there. There's something particularly satisfying



about making a meal out of what you already have around.

lazy

Lazy cooks are busy off doing something else while the meal is making itself. These are the slow-cooked stews simmering on the stove while you're in the garden, the whole head of celery root you leave to roast in the oven for hours, the chicken legs that have been marinating overnight and now just need to be transferred to a baking dish in the oven and left to cook. Al the work

has been done beforehand, to ensure that the dish gets the flavor it needs, but then it's up to the combined forces of heat and time to do al the work.

These are also the one-pot or one-sheet pan dishes, low on washing up, high on ease, and big on flavor: the vegetables mixed with one or two things—carrots with harissa, for example, or mushrooms and chestnuts with za'atar—tipped onto a sheet pan and simply roasted. These are the cakes that need no baking and the rice dishes that can be put into the oven in a baking sheet and forgotten about. These are the dishes that fil your house with smel s, don't fil your sink with washing up, and allow you to get on with those jobs you never seem to get around to—or, alternatively, to delight in the



possibility of actual y being lazy and returning to bed with the paper.

easier than you think

Easy cooking, like simple cooking, depends on what kind of cook you are. One person's idea of easy is different than the next. Making your own bread, for example, is either something you grew up doing or, on the other hand, have never even contemplated. Pastries, ice cream, labneh, custard—they're al the same.

Sometimes the simplest things—getting couscous or rice

perfectly fluffy or an egg perfectly boiled—can floor one. The "E" recipes in this book wil show you how much easier dishes can be than you think.

Other recipes that fal into this category are the ones that look or sound a bit restauranty but are actual y super easy. The burrata with gril ed grapes and basil (this page), and the Trout tartare with browned butter, and pistachios (this page) are examples. These both read as though they should be served in a high-end restaurant, but you'l be amazed by how easy they actual y are. Don't be intimidated, also, by recipe names that have French or Italian words in them. Confit, carpaccio, and clafoutis al sound like you should only try the recipe if you've been to cooking school, but it's al just a ruse!

This is true of al cooking, real y. Notwithstanding words in languages you might not speak, if you can read you can cook, and if you know what kind of cook you are—a make-ahead cook or a short-on-time cook or a whatever-I-have-in-my-cupboard cook—then things wil

be simpler stil. None of us are one set type or the other, of course; we are al sorts of different cooks for al sorts of different occasions and times in our lives. My hope, though, is that for al those who want their food to remain abundant and bold but the cooking of it to be simple, the Ottolenghi SIMPLE structure here wil be a kitchen liberation.

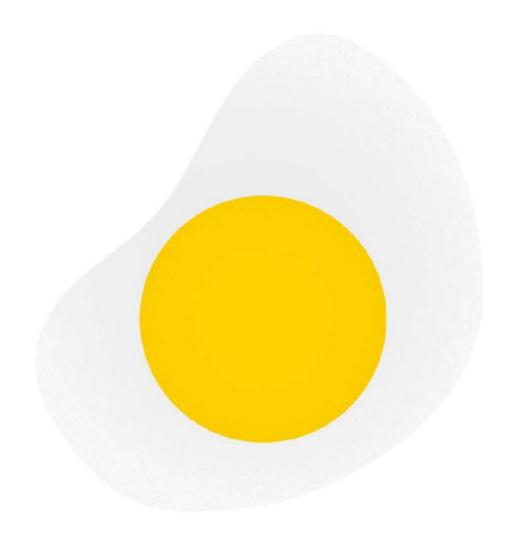
a note about ingredients, makeahead recommendations, and oven temperatures

Unless otherwise stated: Al eggs are large, al milk is whole, al weights in parentheses are net, al salt is table salt, black pepper is freshly cracked, parsley is flat-leaf, and al herbs are fresh. Onions are white, olive oil is extra-virgin, and lemon and lime pith are to be avoided when the zest is shaved. Onions, garlic, and shal ots are al in need of peeling, unless otherwise stated. Preserved lemons are smal. Belazu rose harissa has been used throughout the book; different varieties and brands of harissa vary greatly from each other so the instruction

to increase or decrease the amount needed is always given. Flour is measured by scooping the cup into the bin and leveling with a knife.

When a recipe (or parts of the recipe) can be made ahead, estimates are given for how far in advance this can be: up to 6 hours, up to 2 days, up to 1 week, and so forth. Different conditions wil affect how long something lasts, though—how long it has been kept out of the fridge, how hot the kitchen is, etcetera—so make-ahead recommendations must be weighed on a case-by-case basis as to whether something is stil in good shape to eat. When instructed to keep something in the fridge, if made in advance, it wil be best eaten once brought back to room temperature (or warmed through) rather than eaten fridge-cold.

We also recommend using an oven thermometer as al ovens wil vary.

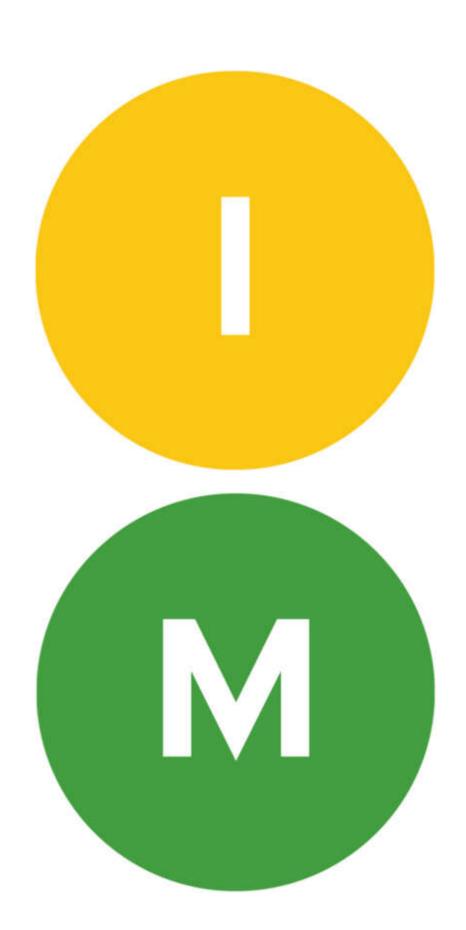


Brunch



Braised eggs with leek and za'atar







This is a quick way to get a very comforting meal on the table in a wonderful y

short amount of time. It's a dish as happily eaten for brunch, with coffee, as it is for a light supper with some crusty white bread and a glass of wine. The leeks

and spinach can be made up to 1 day ahead and kept in the fridge, ready for the

eggs to be cracked in and braised.

Serves six

- 2 tbsp unsalted butter
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 extra-large leeks (or 4 smal er), trimmed and cut into ½-inch/½ cm

slices (6 cups/530g)

salt and black pepper

1 tsp cumin seeds, toasted and lightly crushed

 $\frac{1}{2}$ small preserved lemon, seeds discarded, skin and flesh finely chopped ($2\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp)

1¹/₄ cups/300ml vegetable stock

7 oz/200g baby spinach leaves

6 large eggs

3½ oz/90g feta, broken into ¾-inch/2cm pieces

1 tbsp za'atar

1.

Put the butter and 1 tbsp of the oil into a large sauté pan with a lid and place over medium-high heat. Once the butter starts to foam, add the leeks, ½ tsp of salt, and plenty of pepper. Fry for 3 minutes, stirring frequently, until the leeks are soft. Add the cumin, lemon, and vegetable stock and boil rapidly for 4–5 minutes, until most of the stock has evaporated. Fold in the spinach and cook for 1 minute, until wilted, then decrease the heat to medium.

2.

Use a large spoon to make 6 indentations in the mixture and break 1 egg into each space. Sprinkle the eggs with a pinch of salt, dot the feta

around the eggs, then cover the pan. Simmer for 4–5 minutes, until the egg whites are cooked but the yolks are stil runny.

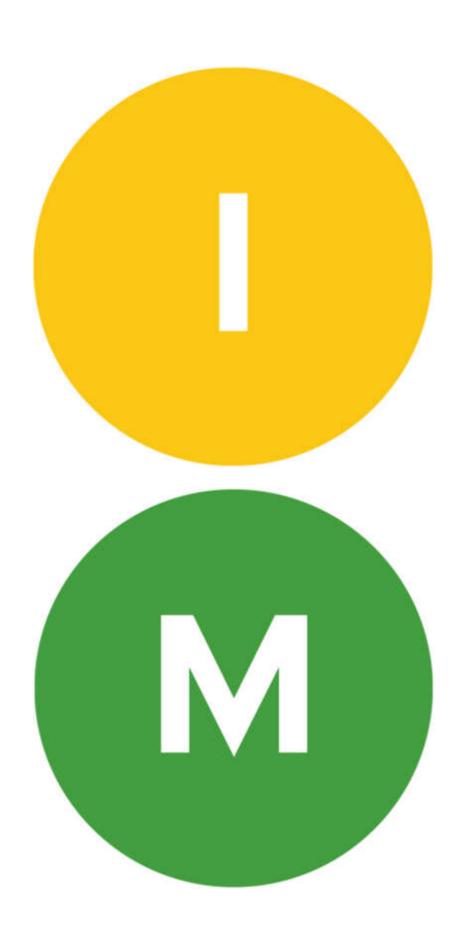
3.

Mix the za'atar with the remaining 1 tbsp of oil and brush over the eggs. Serve at once, straight from the pan.



Harissa and Manchego omeletes







I like to eat this either for brunch or for a speedy supper, with a fresh tomato and avocado salad on the side. The onions can be caramelized 2 days in advance and

kept in the fridge, so it is worth making a double batch of these. Add a

tablespoonful to scrambled eggs or couscous salad, for example. Make the egg

mixture the day before if you like and let it sit in the fridge. Everything is then ready to be poured into the pan.

Serves four

5 tbsp plus 2 tsp/85ml olive oil

1 large onion, thinly sliced (2½ cups/250g)

12 large eggs, lightly beaten

7 tbsp/100ml whole milk

4½ tbsp/65g rose harissa (or 50 percent more or less, depending on variety; see this page)

2 tsp nigella seeds

³/₄ cup/15g cilantro, roughly chopped

salt and black pepper

4 oz/110g Manchego, coarsely grated

2 limes, halved, to serve

1.

Preheat the broiler to high.

2.

Put 3 tbsp of the oil into a medium (8-inch/20cm) ovenproof frying pan and place over medium heat. Add the onion and cook for 15 minutes, stirring from time to time, until the onion has caramelized and is a deep golden brown. Tip into a large bowl and add the eggs, milk, harissa, nigel a seeds, half the cilantro, ½ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Whisk to combine and set aside.

3.

Wipe clean the pan you cooked the onions in, increase the heat to medium-high, and add 2 tsp of the oil. Pour in one-quarter of the egg mixture, swirling it around so that the mixture is evenly spread. After 1

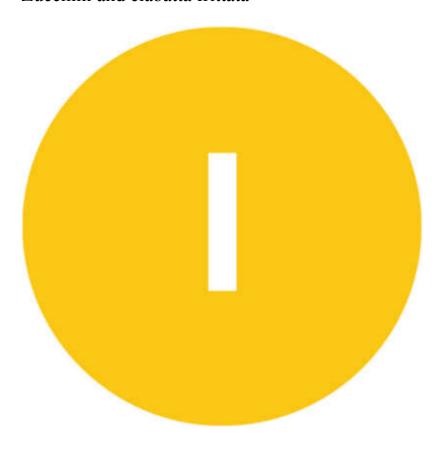
minute, sprinkle with one-quarter of the Manchego and place under the broiler for 1 minute for the cheese to melt and the eggs to puff up and finish cooking. Using a spatula, ease around the edges of the omelete to slide it out of the pan and onto a plate. Keep warm while you continue with the remaining egg mix in the same way, adding more oil with each batch, to get 4 omeletes.

4.

Serve at once, with the remaining cilantro sprinkled on top and a lime half alongside.



Zucchini and ciabatta frittata





This is a regular feature at home on the weekend, when Karl and I are feeding

friends. We tend to serve it with a mixed herb and leaf salad dressed with lemon

juice and olive oil and a few chunks of feta crumbled over it. The frittata manages to be light, fluffy, and comforting in a way that you can only get when you soak

bread with milk and cream. Don't waste the ciabatta crusts: they can be blitzed

into fresh breadcrumbs and freeze wel. This can be baked about 4 hours in

advance and then warmed through for 5 minutes before serving. Ideal y it should

be eaten on the day it is baked, but it wil keep in the fridge for 1 day; just warm through for 10 minutes.

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Serves six
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1 lb 2 oz/500g ciabatta, crusts removed, roughly torn (6 cups/250g)

3/4 cup plus 2 tbsp/200ml whole milk

³/₄ cup plus 2 tbsp/200ml heavy cream

2 large garlic cloves, passed through a garlic press

6 large eggs, lightly beaten

3/4 tsp ground cumin

3 oz/80g Parmesan, finely grated

salt and black pepper

2 medium zucchini, coarsely grated (4 cups/430g)

1¹/₄ cups/25g basil leaves, torn

2 tbsp olive oil

1.

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

2.

Put the ciabatta, milk, and cream into a medium bowl and mix wel.

Cover and set aside for 30 minutes, for the bread to absorb most of the liquid.

3.

Put the garlic, eggs, cumin and ½ cup/50g of Parmesan into a separate

large bowl with ¾ tsp salt and ¼ tsp pepper. Mix wel, then add the bread and any remaining liquid, fol owed by the zucchini and basil. Stir gently.

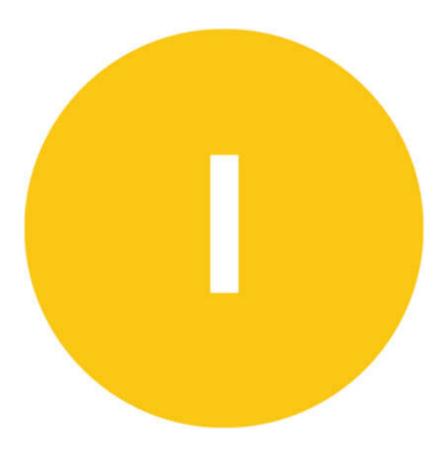
4.

Place an 8 x 10-inch/20 x 25cm baking dish in the oven for 5 minutes, until hot. Remove from the oven, brush with the oil, and pour in the zucchini mix. Even out the top and bake for 20 minutes. Sprinkle the last of the Parmesan evenly on top of the frittata, then bake for another 20–25 minutes, until the frittata is cooked through—a knife inserted into the center should come out clean—and the top is golden brown. Set aside for 5 minutes, then serve.



Portobello mushrooms with brioche and poached eggs





As with al dishes that involve eggs and toast and getting ready in the morning,

this is all about timing. Ideal y, you want the mushrooms and toast coming out of the oven about the same time, and the eggs poached and ready soon after. Get

the mushrooms cooking first, put the bread into the oven halfway through, and

then get the eggs poaching. This works as wel as a starter late in the day as it does in the morning. Use duck eggs for an extra-rich twist.

Serves four

14 oz/400g portobello mushrooms, sliced ½-inch/1cm thick

5 tbsp/75ml olive oil

2 garlic cloves, crushed

½ tsp ground cinnamon

flaked sea salt and black pepper

1/4 cup/5g basil leaves

1/8 tsp ground red pepper, plus extra to serve

4 slices of brioche, cut ³/₄-inch/2cm thick (about 5¹/₄ oz/150g)

4 large eggs

1/3 cup plus 2 tbsp/100g sour cream, to serve

1.

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

2.

Mix the mushrooms with 3 tbsp of the oil, 1 garlic clove, ½ tsp of the cinnamon, ½ tsp flaked salt, and a good grind of pepper. Spread out on a large parchment-lined baking sheet and roast for 15 minutes, stirring after 7 minutes, until soft and starting to brown. Toss with the basil and set aside.

3.

While the mushrooms are in the oven, mix the remaining 2 tbsp of oil with the remaining ½ tsp of cinnamon, 1 garlic clove, the pepper flakes, and ½ tsp of flaked salt. Brush the oil and spices on one side of the brioche slices and place on a separate parchment-lined baking sheet, brushed side up. With about 6 or 7 minutes left for the mushrooms,

put the bread into the oven alongside the mushrooms and toast until the bread is golden brown and crisp.

4.

Meanwhile, fil a medium saucepan with plenty of water and bring to a boil over high heat. Once boiling, decrease the heat to medium-high and careful y break in the eggs. Poach for 1½ minutes for a runny yolk (or a little longer for a firmer set).

5.

Divide the brioche among four plates and top each slice with the mushrooms so that they are al ready. Using a slotted spoon, remove the eggs from the water and spoon them on top of the mushrooms.

Sprinkle each egg with a pinch of salt and a pinch of pepper flakes and serve warm, with a spoonful of sour cream alongside.