

Flavour Fest



FOOD FOR THOUGHT: FOOD COMBINATIONS

There has been something of a flavour revolution over recent years with many new flavour pairings coming onto the market or appearing in recipes. There are classics that we probably take for granted now such as cheese and tomato, salt and vinegar, roast beef and mustard, pork and apple and rhubarb and custard!! Then there are slightly more unusual pairings that may have seemed unthinkable or unsalable maybe only a few years ago...

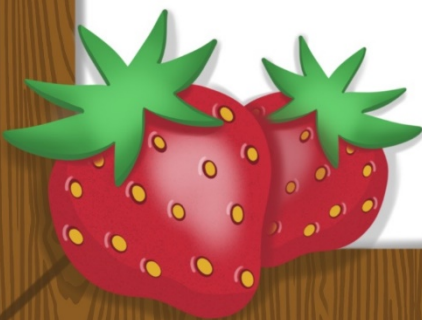
CHILLI AND CHOCOLATE:

together probably still divides opinion in a lot of people! Although it has only become a more popular choice for chocolates, cakes or snacks in the last decade or so, it was actually as far back as The Mayans in 250 – 900CE who first discovered the chocolate and chilli combination. They ground fermented and roasted cocoa seeds into a paste, mixed them with water and chilli peppers and made it into a drink. It was the Aztecs of Mexico in 1300 – 1521AD that then really took over chocolate drinks in a big way! The last Aztec ruler Montezuma II was said to only drink their infamous chocolate and chilli drink named 'xocolate' meaning bitter sweet and nothing else! Europeans then added sugar to sweeten and fats to solidify the mixture and modern day chocolate bars were born. However, the Europeans were not so keen on the addition of chilli to chocolate but it is potentially the 2000 film 'Chocolat' starring Juliette Binoche where she adds powdered chilli to the chocolates in her little French chocolate shop that re-introduces this combination to the European market.

MARMITE FUDGE:

has got to be another opinion divider especially as marmite itself is known as a love or hate foodstuff! Marmite is a spread made from yeast extract and was invented by accident German scientist Justus Leibig in the late 19th century. The Marmite Food company was founded in 1902 in Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, England as the raw material of yeast was already available from the Town's brewers. However, the name 'marmite' is actually French and means a type of fish stew known as 'Marmite Dieppoise' and it is this pot that has appeared on the red and yellow marmite label since the 1920's. As for fudge, it is often thought that this originated in the West Country but this is not actually the case. The first record of fudge is actually in America in the late 19th century where a New York student makes the confectionary for her college auction. The origin of fudge is thought to mean a mistake (fudge up)

and early recipes called for butter, milk and sugar which is still a fairly traditional recipe used today. The addition of varying flavours have been tried over the years, from vanilla, chocolate and strawberry to Christmas Pudding, Sloe Gin and even Marmite!! Which has become a surprisingly popular flavour, I think it works but what about you?



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BACON AND MAPLE SYRUP PANCAKES

Bacon and maple syrup on pancakes has been around for some time, originally popular in Canada and the US, it is now often on breakfast menus in the UK too. Pancakes have been popular in many cultures over the years including the Ancient Greeks and Romans but originally date back over 30,000 years to the Stone Age! Pancake remains were found in the stomach of Otzi the Iceman, human remains that date back 5300 years and found on the border of Austria and Italy. The basic pancake recipe involves eggs, flour, milk and sugar. Maple Syrup was first made and used by the indigenous peoples of North America and there are several legends surrounding how this discovery was made. One involved a chief of a local tribe who is said to have thrown his axe at a maple tree and sap ran out, which his wife collected and used it to cook their venison in. The syrup comes from the sap of 3 main types of maple tree; the sugar maple, the black maple and the red maple and the sap used flows in late winter or early spring. Pair these two sweet combinations with the saltiness of cooked crispy bacon and the perfect hearty breakfast is enough to get most people out of bed in the mornings or is it?

INGREDIENTS:

- 440g smoked bacon
- 125g plain flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 150ml semi-skimmed milk
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 tbsp sunflower oil
- 20g unsalted butter
- 80ml maple syrup

METHOD:

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas mark 6. Put the bacon on a baking tray and cook in the oven for 15-20 minutes, until crisp.

Meanwhile, sift the flour and baking powder into a bowl. Whisk the milk and egg together in a jug until smooth. Make a well in the middle of the flour, then gradually beat in the egg and milk mixture with a wooden spoon, drawing in the flour from the edges to make a batter the consistency of single cream. Leave to stand while the bacon cooks.

2. When the bacon's nearly ready, heat a non-stick frying pan and brush with a little of the oil. Place 1 tbsp batter into the pan, swirl into a 7cm circle, then repeat, leaving at least 3cm between each pancake. Cook for 1-2 minutes until the tops start to bubble, then turn over and cook for a further 1-2 minutes. Set aside and keep warm. Repeat with the remaining batter until all the mixture is used up.

3. Serve the pancakes with the bacon and a little butter, drizzled with the maple syrup.

