



Get comfy with Jamie

Jamie Oliver's new cookbook comes from the heart, its luscious pages filled with his ultimate comfort foods, which are served with a good dollop of childhood memories, too

WORDS RACHEL LOOS

JAMIE OLIVER WAS in his kitchen at home cooking a few weeks ago, a glass of wine in hand, Ed Sheeran riffing in the background. 'I was so happy,' he says. His wife, Jools, was there, too. 'Do you really like cooking?' she asked him as she watched. 'Yeah, I do, I love it,' he answered her a little quizzically. 'No,' she replied. 'I mean, do you really, really, *really* love it.' Jamie laughs as he recalls the memory. 'This was my wife asking me! The woman I've known since I was 18!'

The truth is that Jamie Oliver, 39, does really, really, *really* love food. Jools once woke him up because he was talking in his sleep about onions, and even after all these years he never gets tired of cooking, eating, talking and writing about it. With his multimillion-pound empire, which encompasses restaurants around the world, often-controversial campaigns, festivals

and a range of pizza ovens, it is easy to forget that what lies at the heart of Jamie is his passion for food.

His new book, *Jamie's Comfort Food* is a delicious reminder. Rooted in dishes that tug at the emotions as well as the tastebuds – one-third have their origins in Jamie's childhood, one-third are British classics and one-third are international recipes – it is filled with recipes that are all about the Jamie-inspired extras that change a dish from the ordinary into the extraordinary, but in his typical no-pretension style.

'*Comfort Food* is a very dear book to me,' says Jamie. 'It comes from inside my belly. It's the me you get at the weekend – relaxed, happy... You might think I'm a bit bonkers by the end of it, but I'm a bit like that in real life anyway!'

Comfort Food is a book for the weekend, for spending time in the kitchen cooking ▶



BLOODY MARY BEEF

Serves 8 • 5½–6½ hours • 567 calories

1 x 1kg piece of brisket • olive oil
 • 1 head of celery • 4 small red onions
 • ½ a bunch of fresh rosemary (15g)
 • 2 fresh bay leaves
Bloody Mary mix 1 lemon • 1 x 700g jar of passata
 • 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce • a few drops of Tabasco sauce
 • 3 tablespoons vodka • 1 tablespoon port
Mash 1.6kg Maris Piper potatoes • 50g unsalted butter • 1-2 heaped tablespoons jarred grated horseradish • semi-skimmed milk
Kale 400g curly kale • extra virgin olive oil

1. Preheat the oven to 130°C/250°F/gas ½. Place a casserole pan (25cm in diameter and 10cm high) over a high heat. Season the brisket all over with sea salt and pepper, then put into the pan (it should fit inside fairly snugly) with a splash of olive oil and cook for 10 minutes, turning until browned all over. Meanwhile, trim the celery and chop into 5cm chunks, then peel and quarter the onions. Add both to the pan, reduce to a low heat and cook gently for 5 to 10 minutes, or until slightly softened.

2. Squeeze the lemon juice into a large jug and mix with all the rest of the Bloody Mary ingredients. Pour into the pan with 500ml of cold water and a good pinch of salt and pepper. Tie the rosemary and bay together and add to the pan. Bring everything to the boil, then turn off the heat, cover the pan with damp greaseproof paper and tin foil and cook in the oven for 5 to 6 hours, or until the beef is tender and falling apart.

3. With about 20 minutes to go, peel and roughly chop the potatoes and cook in a pan of boiling salted water for 15 minutes, or until tender. Remove any tough stalks from the curly kale, put into a pan of boiling water for 1 to 2 minutes, or until tender, then drain and drizzle with a little extra virgin olive oil. Drain the potatoes in a colander and leave to steam dry, then return to the pan and mash well with the butter, horseradish and a splash of milk, then season to perfection. Pull the beef apart with two forks, toss through the Bloody Mary sauce (discarding the herb bunch), then serve with the horseradish mash and curly kale.

NASI GORENG

Serves 4 • 45 minutes • 535 calories

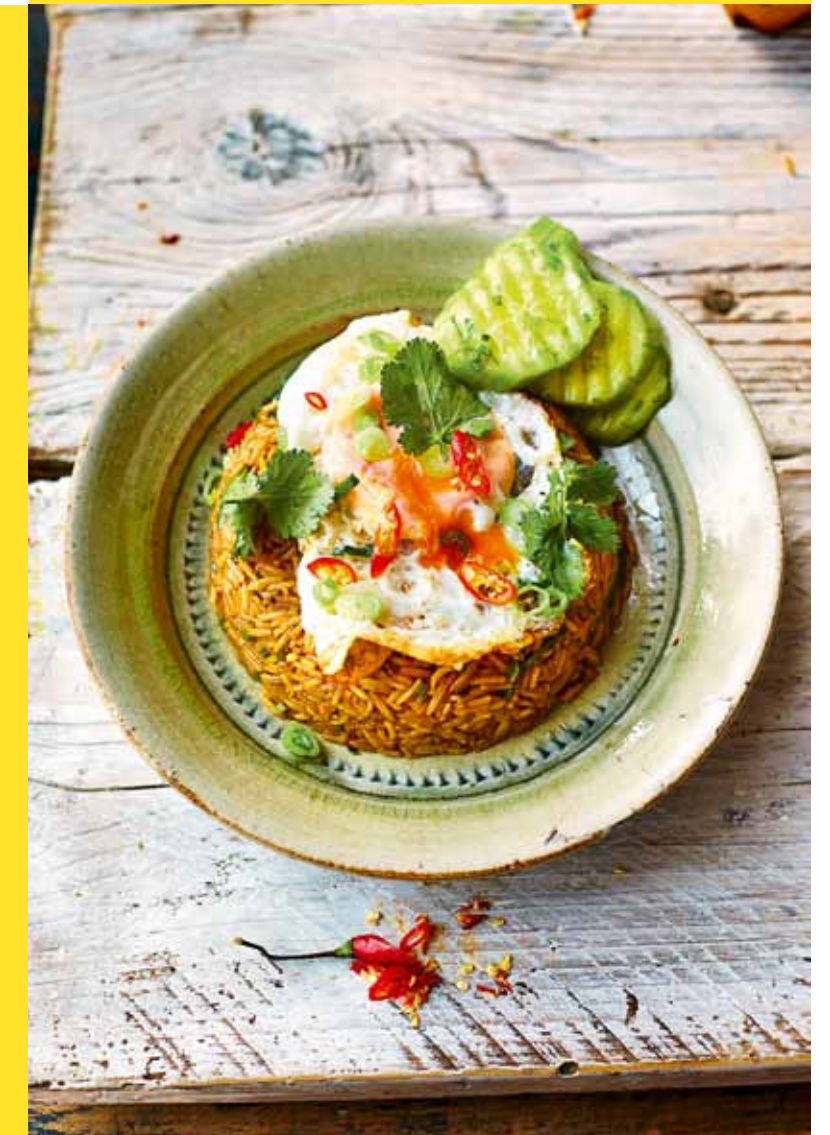
1 mug of basmati rice (320g) • 1 onion
 • 2 cloves of garlic • 1 thumb-sized piece of ginger • 1-2 fresh bird's-eye chillies
 • 200g sugar snap peas • 200g tenderstem broccoli • groundnut oil • 1 tablespoon palm sugar • 3 tablespoons kecap manis (sweet soy sauce) • fish sauce • hot chilli sauce
Cucumber Pickle 1 large cucumber
 • 1 bunch of fresh coriander (30g) • rice wine vinegar • 1 lime • caster sugar
Bubbly Eggs 4 spring onions • 1-2 fresh bird's-eye chillies • 4 large eggs

1. Put 1 mug of rice into a pan with a pinch of sea salt, cover with 2 mugs of boiling water and cook on a medium heat for 10 to 12 minutes, or until cooked through. Tip onto a large tray and spread out into a thin layer to steam and cool completely. Of course, you can simply use up leftover rice from the day before, which is even better.

2. Meanwhile, make the pickle. Peel the cucumber, then slice it ½cm thick (with a crinklecut knife if you've got one), and place in a bowl. Finely chop half the coriander stalks (reserving the leaves) and add to the bowl with a good few swigs of vinegar. Add the lime zest and juice, and caster sugar, then season and toss together well.

3. Peel the onion, garlic and ginger, deseed the chillies, then finely chop it all with the remaining coriander stalks. Finely slice the sugar snap peas at an angle, and cut the broccoli into bite-sized pieces. Place a large heavy-bottomed pan or wok on a high heat, add a lug of oil, then go in with the onion, garlic, ginger, chilli, coriander stalks and palm sugar. Stir-fry for a few minutes, then add the sugar snaps, broccoli and cooled rice and continue cooking for 3 to 4 minutes, or until the rice is hot through, tossing regularly. Stir in the kecap manis and a few shakes of fish sauce to season, then turn the heat off. Place a quarter of the rice in a small bowl, push down to compact, then turn out onto a serving plate – think sandcastles! Repeat with the remaining rice.

4. For the bubbly eggs, trim the spring onions and finely slice with the chillies. Place a large non-stick pan on a high heat and add ½cm of oil. Once hot, crack in the eggs and fry so the whites really bubble up and get crispy round the edges – by angling the pan you can spoon hot oil over the yolks as they cook to your liking. Remove to kitchen paper and pat off the excess oil, then use the eggs to top each portion of rice. Scatter over the spring onions, chilli and reserved coriander leaves, drizzled with some hot chilli sauce for a bit of a kick and serve with the cucumber pickle. Happy days.



for family and friends. The 100 recipes range from baked beans with rosemary and chilli oil to lobster mac 'n' cheese and pineapple upside-down cake. To find the international selection, Jamie asked people via social media which dishes were important to them, and the 30 most popular suggestions were given the Jamie treatment – a French cassoulet has been transformed into Cassoulet de Essex, a simpler version of the original (see it and other recipes on these pages). His childhood foods have also been given a touch of culinary firepower – his mother's lasagne has been transformed using roast duck. The end result, says Jamie, 'is bloody outrageous!'

Jamie's own food memories start early. His parents ran – and still run – The Cricketers, a gastro-pub and hotel in Essex, and as a child he knew his way around a kitchen early. He remembers his mum's chicken pie as being 'something pretty special. And when I was about five or six, my dad showed me how to make the perfect steak sandwich,' he says. At nine, Jamie cooked his first Sunday roast with all the trimmings. 'I remember enjoying it with the family, and I could tell Dad was so proud of me,' says Jamie. 'And I remember I really liked that feeling; to be good at something because I was pretty much s*** at everything else.' This was 13 years before the dyslexic boy who got Ds at school ended up at The River Café, where he stole their Christmas special TV show and landed his own *Naked Chef* series.

'This book is the me you get at the weekend – relaxed, happy...'

Sunday roasts are still deeply important to him. His mother's 'roast beef with Yorkshire puddings and vegetables galore' is Jamie's choice of a Last Supper meal, and it remains a staple in the Oliver household. 'We're quite a big family now, so I tend to do quite big things that give us leftovers,' he says. Childhood meals of dishes passed round the table feature strongly in his memory, and he is happiest cooking for his family – Jools and their children, Poppy, 12, Daisy, 11, Petal, five, and Buddy Bear, almost four – at home. A long working week, though, means he only gets to do that at the weekends. 'If I'm home, I cook,' he says. The rest of the time it's Jools who caters for the children. 'It's more the cooking you find in *15-Minute Meals*,' he says. 'Cleaner and quicker. We style it up at the weekends!'

It's then that Jamie gets to indulge, creating the slow-cooking type of dishes found in *Comfort Food*. The shepherd's pie ▶



CASSOULET DE ESSEX

Serves 8 • 3 hours 20 minutes plus marinating • 755 calories

20g coarse sea salt • 8 sprigs of fresh thyme • 8 cloves • 8 juniper berries • 12 fresh bay leaves • 5 cloves of garlic • 1 orange • 1 whole nutmeg, for grating • 3 duck legs • 600g lamb breast • 500g pork belly, skin removed • 3 Toulouse sausages • 1 large onion • 2 sticks of celery • 1 large leek • 6 sprigs of fresh rosemary • 2 x 400g tins of plum tomatoes • good splash of Merlot or Malbec • 1 x 660g jar of cannellini beans • 200g fresh breadcrumbs • olive oil • ½ a lemon

1. Put your weighed salt, the thyme, cloves, juniper berries, 4 bay leaves and 4 cloves of peeled garlic into a food processor. Finely grate in the orange zest and the nutmeg and add a good pinch of black pepper. Blitz to make a flavoured salt, then rub really well over the duck legs, lamb breast and pork belly in a large tray. Cover with clingfilm and place in the fridge overnight to marinate.

2. The next day, preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas 4. Brush the salt off the meat and pat the meat dry with kitchen paper. Cut the duck legs into thighs and drumsticks, and divide both the lamb and pork into 8 equal pieces. Put the duck,

lamb and pork into a snug-fitting tray and roast for 1 hour 30 minutes. When the time's up, remove most of the rendered fat from the tray to a bowl, toss the sausages in the tray with the other meat and return to the oven for 20 minutes while you make the sauce.

3. Peel the onion and finely chop with the celery, leek and rosemary leaves, then add to a large ovenproof casserole pan with 2 tablespoons of reserved fat and fry for 15 minutes on a medium heat. Tip in the tomatoes and 2 tins' worth of water, breaking the tomatoes up with a spoon. Bring to the boil, then simmer for 5 minutes. Remove the tray from the oven and add the meat to the sauce. Stir the wine around the tray to pick up any sticky goodness from the bottom, then add to the sauce and stir together.

4. For an amazing topping, drain the beans into a large bowl and add the breadcrumbs. Remove and discard the stalks from the remaining bay leaves, then smash them up in a pestle and mortar with the remaining peeled clove of garlic and a pinch of salt until completely pulped. Muddle in a good lug of oil and grate in the lemon zest, then mix with the beans and breadcrumbs and scatter over the cassoulet. Bake for 1 hour, or until thick, golden and bubbling. Serve with loads of steamed seasonal greens.

in the book has become a new favourite at home. Based on his research into the origins of the dish, Jamie's version has mashed potato not just on top but also on the sides and bottom. 'And the kids go mental for it,' he says. 'They're always after the crunchy bits, and with this one there are loads. My kids are pretty good. They've been exposed to a lot by being around us, but a trouble-free dinner, all six of us, where someone's not having a freak-out about what's on their plate..?' He laughs ruefully. 'But with this shepherd's pie they're quite quiet!'

It's not the same story when he does a curry – even his famed chicken tikka masala gets the thumbs-down. 'It's depressing because I love curries so much, as does the wife,' he says. 'I probably need to make them milder – my idea of mild probably isn't mild enough!'

Jamie does enjoy simple food – 'I'll never get tired of a cheese sandwich made with a good cheddar, fresh brown bread, butter and Branston Pickle' – but he has an unquenchable desire to make even the most mundane special, so in *Comfort Food* a cheese sandwich has become, 'Dare I say it, the best cheese toastie I've ever seen in my life! It's bonkers – I spent a day cooking and perfecting it, but it's worth it.'

Is there anything he can't cook? 'I used to struggle with poached eggs,' he says. 'It was a technical thing and it really pissed me off.' Suffice to say, he has now mastered the art. 'The secret is fresh, small eggs,' he says. 'But now I've also got an idiot-proof version for large eggs that aren't so fresh.'

He'll put one of his poached eggs into a salad for lunch. These days, Jamie watches what he eats, restricting himself to a few carbs and fruit for breakfast and 'an exciting ninja salad' for lunch, before tucking into whatever he likes for dinner. 'Over the past few years, the biggest change is that I eat veggie about three times a week,' he says. 'As I've got older, I've started taking notice of my health; now when I eat meat I want to know it's good for me, and the animal was treated well.'

What's in his fridge is also different. 'Always butter, nice yogurt and streaky bacon, but we also have almond and coconut milk, as well as regular milk,' he says. 'The fun, though, is in the pantry and the brilliant things that keep cropping up, like chipotle paste, that we'd never heard of 15 years ago. Now you can come home with a bit of chicken, fish or butternut squash and go anywhere with it. It's quite exciting if you know how to cook.' And if you're Jamie Oliver. ■



EXTRACTED FROM
JAMIE'S COMFORT FOOD
BY JAMIE OLIVER,
PUBLISHED BY MICHAEL
JOSEPH. RECIPES
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MILK TART

Serves 10 • 1 hour 20 minutes plus chilling & cooling • 317 calories

Pastry 250g plain flour, plus extra for dusting • 50g icing sugar • 125g unsalted butter (cold) • 1 large egg • 1 splash of semi-skimmed milk
Filling 600ml semi-skimmed milk • 1 vanilla pod (look for a really nice, fat juicy one) • 1 knob of unsalted butter • 2 large eggs • 2 tablespoons cornflour • 1½ tablespoons plain flour • 75g golden caster sugar • 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
Optional: Caramel 30g caster sugar

1. For the pastry, sieve the flour and icing sugar into a bowl. Cut the butter into cubes, then gently rub it into the flour and sugar until the mixture resembles breadcrumb crumbs. Add the egg and a pinch of sea salt, gently work it together using your hands, then add the milk to bring it into a scruffy ball. Don't overwork it or it will become elastic and chewy, rather than crumbly and short. Wrap in clingfilm, then chill for 30 minutes.
2. Lightly oil the inside of a deep 24cm non-stick loose-bottomed tart tin. Dust a clean surface and a rolling pin with flour, then roll out the pastry to ½cm thick, dusting with flour if required. Loosely roll the pastry around the rolling pin, then unroll over the tart tin, pushing it into the sides. Trim off any excess and use that to patch any holes, prick the base all over with a fork, then pop into the freezer for 20 minutes.

3. Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas 4. Loosely criss-cross 2 large pieces of quality clingfilm over the pastry case. Fill up with uncooked rice or ceramic baking beans, loosely fold in the clingfilm, then bake blind for 10 minutes. Remove from the oven, lift out the clingfilm-wrapped rice or beans, saving them for next time. Return the pastry case to the oven for 10 minutes, or until almost biscuit-like, then remove.

4. Meanwhile, for the filling, pour the milk into a small pan, halve the vanilla pod lengthways and scrape out the seeds, then add both seeds and pod to the milk. Gently simmer for 15 minutes, then remove from the heat, and stir in the butter to melt. In a bowl, beat the eggs with the cornflour, plain flour and sugar, then, when the milk has cooled a little, gradually whisk it into the egg mixture. Tip back into the pan and place over a low heat for 5 to 10 minutes, or until thickened, whisking constantly, then discard the vanilla pod. Pour into the pastry case and dust with the ground cinnamon through a sieve from a height. Bake for 20 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool.

5. For an optional extra, just before serving make a caramel topping. Melt the sugar in a non-stick frying pan with a splash of water over a medium heat until lightly golden – do not stir – then pour over the tart (you can see how to do this on jamieoliver.com/how-to). Cool fully at room temperature, then tap and crack the caramel and serve.