

Mussels *Dijonnaise*

Now is peak season for mussels—they're thriving in the cool spring waters off the British coastline and make for a tasty meal. Our native shellfish have been used for sustenance for more than 20,000 years and prehistoric Scottish settlements can be identified by mounds of mussel shells found nearby. So fall back in love with mussels with this simple dish!

Serves 4

- 750g frozen French fries
- 2kg mussels
- 50g butter
- 2-3 leeks, thoroughly rinsed and thinly sliced
- 2 sprigs of thyme, stripped from the stem
- 375ml white wine
- 2tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1tbsp crème fraîche
- ½ lemon, juiced
- 2tbsp flatleaf parsley, chopped
- 100g lambs lettuce



Rachel Walker is a food writer for numerous national publications. Visit rachel-walker.co.uk for more information

1. Tip the French fries into a roasting tray and cook, as per pack instructions.
2. Next, prepare the mussels. Most farmed mussels in the UK don't require too much work—simply tip into a colander, rinse under a running cold tap and tug out the knotty fibre “beards.” It's good practice to sift through the mussels and discard any which have open shells, which indicates that they have died and shouldn't be eaten.
3. Melt the butter in the biggest pan you have—ideally a stock pot. Add the leeks and thyme, and sweat on a low heat until they are soft. Turn up the heat and add the white wine, so that it hisses as it hits the hot pan. Let it cook at a fast simmer for 1 minute, then stir in the mustard and crème fraîche and bring the sauce up to a running simmer again before adding all the mussels. Tip them into the pot and cook covered for 3 minutes, giving the pan a shake halfway through. Lift the lid to check that all the mussel shells have now pinged open—give them another minute if not.
4. Toss a little salt over the French fries, and then ladle the mussels into warmed, shallow dishes. Finish with a squeeze of lemon and chopped parsley, and serve with a simply dressed lambs lettuce salad.



Drinks Tip...

White Burgundy is a great choice for shellfish. The Society's White Burgundy (£9.95, The Wine Society) is a real crowd pleaser, with a refreshing apple-crispness which makes an ideal pairing for rich flavours.

APPLE STRUDEL

SERVES 6

- 100g sultanas
- 100g butter
- 75g breadcrumbs
- 50g Muscovado sugar
- 800g apple (Bramley, Braeburn), peeled, cored and cut into chunks
- ½tsp of cinnamon, pinch of ground cloves and freshly-grated nutmeg
- 250g pre-rolled filo pastry

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C, and line a tray with baking parchment. Cover the sultanas with hot water from the kettle and leave them to soak and plump up. Melt the butter in a frying pan. Tip half into a small dish, and fry the breadcrumbs in the remaining butter—on a low heat, until they turn crisp and golden.

2. Tip the breadcrumbs into a bowl. Add the Muscovado sugar, apple chunks, spices and drained sultanas, and stir until combined.

3. Use a pastry brush to paint a thin layer of the remaining melted butter onto one of the sheets of filo, and “stick” another filo sheet on top. Continue, until the pastry is four filo sheets thick.

4. Put the pastry on a tea towel, and tip the apple filling into the centre, shape it roughly into a vertical line down the centre. Tuck both ends in and then use the tea towel to fold the sides over. Gently roll it onto the baking parchment, so the join is underneath the parcel.

5. Bake for 40 minutes, until crisp and golden. Dust with icing sugar and serve with cream or ice cream. ■



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