

Simple Sweets and Desserts

For the Stay-at-Home Dad or Recent Home Leaver

By Stuart Box
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Introduction

One piece of feedback that I received a number of times after publishing my first ebook was: “Where are the desserts?” That first book has something to offer for breakfast, light salads and soups as well as main meals and a number of sides, *but no dessert*. I’ve listened and this short ebook is the result.

I am a fan of dessert and all things sweet, but if I have choose which two out of three courses I might have at dinner, for me the starter and main meal will always win out. Without thinking about it I seem to have followed this approach through with the recipes I selected for my first book.

The desserts and sweets I’ve included here will hopefully complement some of the offerings in my other book. I find they round off some of the more spicy dishes quite nicely.

Two of the recipes here: *Warm Tapioca & Fruit Pudding* and *Chocolate Fudge Sundae* are contributions from my wife and daughter respectively and I am extremely grateful both for the recipes and the special treat our family gets when they whip them up in time for dinner.

I hope you enjoy making some of these sweets yourself and if you like the basic skills approach to my recipes or even the little journey I try to take you on with each one, take a look at “[Simple Home Cooking for the Stay-at-Home Dad or Recent Home Leaver](#).” at your preferred ebook retailer.

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Banana Splits in Coconut Milk



Picture this for a moment. You are lucky enough to be spending time somewhere in South East Asia. If you're on a work trip, maybe you're visiting a remote factory or even a mine site. If you are on holiday, you've decided to shrug off the safety and confines of a city hotel or resort pool and go on a trip. It might be to ride an elephant, or perhaps visit a floating market. In any event to get there you will be travelling through the country and you therefore will experience a vastly contrasting view to the concrete and glass jungle you have just left.

After a while you notice that all the trees look the same and seem to be lined up in rows. This isn't a trick of the eye, they are all the same and they are lined up! Then you see a bunch of green bananas on one of the trees. The mystery is solved. A little later the scenery changes, the trees are still in order but they have skinny trunks and all the leaves are at the top. This one is easy, "coconuts" you say to yourself, happy with your horticultural knowledge.

You find that you are now heading uphill. The trees still look a bit like the coconut palms, but have thicker trunks and a lot more leaves. You can't see any coconuts either. This one has you stumped. With gestures and very simple English, you manage to get the driver to understand what you want to know.

"Sugar; sweet," he says with a big grin as he looks at you in the rear view mirror and gestures toward his mouth.

You thank him as you think "palm sugar" of course. Sugar in your homeland most likely comes from cane plantations and this recipe works equally well with that, but for full authenticity, see if you can find some palm sugar. You can generally find it in a grocery store that specialises in Asian food. Often it's sold in bags of chunky crystals that have to be crushed up.

So that's the main ingredients covered. In Asia, this dish is often served with toasted sesame seeds floating on top for a bit of texture and colour.

I have made this recipe out to reflect one serving and is based on one medium sized banana. Just multiply the quantities to reflect the number of servings you need.

*1 medium sized banana
80mL of Coconut Milk.*

Half a tablespoon of sugar
1 teaspoon of sesame seeds

Peel the bananas and slice them lengthways. I generally then cut across the split halves to make a total of eight pieces. I find these fit on your spoon better when you are eating them. Leave them as the two split halves if you prefer to chase them around your plate.

Place the bananas with their flat side up on tinfoil and grill at a medium / hot setting until golden. My grill takes about 10 minutes, but watch them the first time you do it.

While they are cooking, mix the sugar and coconut in a small saucepan under low heat until the sugar dissolves. If you are cooking a number of serves, use a larger saucepan as required.

Now take the golden grilled bananas and put them in the sugar/coconut mix and allow the mixture to gently simmer for about 5 minutes. This gives the banana enough time to soften and also gives you time to toast some sesame seeds in a non stick frypan. Just put the seeds on a medium / hot pan and stir them about. It won't take long.

Now gently pour out the saucepan into a dessert bowl and sprinkle the sesame seeds on top. Done!

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Chocolate Fudge Sundae



When Dad first announced to the family that he would be making a dessert recipe book, I was very excited. I think I have the sweetest tooth in the family, and when he asked for dessert ideas, I immediately said, “Fudge!” I had made this scrumptious dessert a few times before, and trust me, it tastes amazing.

You can get all kinds of fudge in the shops; English toffee, caramel, white, milk and dark chocolate, orange, the list goes on and on. I guess this fudge would be ‘marshmallow, chocolate and coconut’.

So after you make this recipe, and try the product of so many sweet ingredients, I’m sure you’ll agree that this is the richest, most delicious square of anything that you’ve ever tasted. Have fun making it!

2 cups mini marshmallows – these are about 1cm³
2 cups sugar
1 cup of cooking chocolate pieces
2/3 cup evaporated milk
1/2 cup fine desiccated coconut
125g melted butter
1/2 teaspoon vanilla essence

Line a 20cm square tin with aluminium foil, and be sure to leave some overhang to assist you in taking the fudge out when it’s set.

Put the melted butter in a large, microwave safe bowl. I used a casserole dish, and it worked just fine. Stir in the sugar and evaporated milk, and mix until combined.

Microwave the mixture on high for 7-10 minutes. Stir every few minutes, but make sure you are watching it, as it bubbles quite high!

When the sugar is dissolved, add marshmallows, chocolate and vanilla essence. Keep stirring the mixture until the marshmallows and chocolate have melted. I found it works best to add a

quarter in at a time, so the marshmallows don't all stick together! Add the coconut, and stir until all combined.

Pour the mixture into the tin, and let it cool for a while. After it has cooled down, mark squares with a knife on the top. I cut it into 36 squares (6x6), but depending on the size of your tin and how big you want the pieces, any size can be cut, it's really up to you. The fudge is quite rich though, so smaller pieces work better. You can always have two!

Put the tin in the refrigerator for a few hours. When it has set, take it out and cut it into squares. It is great for an afternoon treat or dessert with a scoop of ice cream.

Now sit back, relax, and enjoy this mouth watering piece of heaven.

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Sweet Pastry Puffs



The inspiration for this sweet comes from Brazil where it is often made with cheese and eaten as a pastry for breakfast. Over my five trips to this the largest of the countries in South America, I would have stayed in perhaps ten hotels in a number of cities and a few smaller towns. In common to them all was a tremendous breakfast buffet and while the highlight for me was the freshly brewed coffee, the cheese bread/pastries were a close second.

This versatile dough mixture can be used with cheese, chocolate, jam or any number of fillings. The recipe is quick and easy and will delight both kids and adults alike. Scale up the mixture and freeze the pastries for reheating at another time. They are handy as an afternoon snack or lunchbox treat.

Use this ratio of ingredients. The quantities listed here will make about 12 small pastry puffs. If you want more, scale up the ingredients to suit

*150g of plain white flour (bakers flour is also OK)
100mL of warm water
20g of icing sugar
20g of melted butter
1/2 teaspoon of salt
1/2 teaspoon of yeast
A small quantity of filling – chocolate, jam, cheese etc*

Sift the flour, sugar and salt into a mixing bowl. Sprinkle the yeast on top and stir briefly with a wooden spoon. Add the water and melted butter gradually with stirring so that it mixes evenly into the flour mixture. Continue to stir until a dough forms. With some extra flour on a board and your hands, knead the dough for 3 or 4 minutes. Wrap the ball in plastic film and allow it to stand for 20 minutes.

Roll the dough on a floured board with a rolling pin until about 2 – 3mm thick. Slice into strips approximately 3cm wide by 8cm long. Spread your filling on the strips and carefully roll them up. Place on baking paper on an oven tray. Join the dough off-cuts together, form a ball and repeat the process until it is all used. Cover the pastries and allow them to rise in a warm room for 1 to 2 hours.

Bake in a preheated oven at 180°C until golden brown. This generally takes 8 to 12 minutes but watch them carefully the first time and adjust timing to suit. Enjoy warm for the best taste experience.

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Cinnamon Apple Pie



This is the one that gets the kids excited when they come home from school. The scent of a freshly baked apple pie sometimes makes it outside the front door and the young noses make a beeline for the kitchen to make sure they haven't been deceived. Apple pie for dinner...confirmed!

Apple pie is simple and inexpensive, although it's a good idea to plan ahead as while it takes only 10 minutes of actual hands-on time to prepare, the total time is a little over an hour.

The ingredients here are sufficient to make a 25cm diameter by 3cm deep apple pie...scale them as required if your ceramic baking dish is a different size.

Filling:

*500g of peeled and cored chopped apple
Half a cup of sugar
1 cup of water
1 teaspoon of cinnamon powder*

Pastry:

*2 cups of plain flour
50g of melted butter
3/4 cup of water*

Place all the ingredients for the filling into a two litre saucepan and allow it to simmer for 30 minutes with occasional stirring. The apple should soften and break down over that time and much of the water will be used up in dissolving the sugar or evaporate. Be prepared to use a little more water if it dries up too quickly.

While the apple is cooking, preheat the oven to 160°C for a fan forced oven or 170°C for a regular oven. Combine the ingredients for the pastry in a mixing bowl with a wooden spoon until a ball of dough forms. Knead the dough on a floured board for 3 minutes and allow it to stand for 15 minutes. Grease the baking dish with butter to make for an easy-out of the cooked slices.

Cut the dough into two portions and roll out on a floured board until it is large enough to cover the baking dish plus at least 3cm all around for the sides. The pastry will be quite thin at this stage; picking it up by hand will likely result in it breaking apart. To overcome this, simply place the rolling pin on the edge of the circle of dough closest to you. Gently pick up the side of the dough, place it against the rolling pin and roll the pin away from you until all of the dough is on the rolling pin. Then, place the rolling pin on the side of the baking dish furthest away from you and unroll it so that the dough is left behind. Ease the dough into the baking dish and press it into the sides and corners without stretching. Extra dough can be cut off at this stage by sliding a knife across the top of the edge of the baking dish.

When the apple filling is ready, tip it into the apple pie base and spread evenly. Roll out the other portion of dough and use the same process to cover the baking dish. Again cut off the excess dough and then pinch the top and side together. Use a knife to cut slots in the pie top; this lets steam escape as it cooks and will give you a crispy pastry. A decorative pattern looks good too.

It is likely that you have some extra pastry and possibly some apple filling left over. This can be used to make mini apple pies as follows:

Roll the pastry into a thin sheet. Cut into sections about 10cm by 15 cm. Spoon on some apple mix and roll up the pastry. Pinch them closed at the ends and prick them with a fork. Place on baking paper on an oven tray.

Cook the pie in the oven for about 20 minutes or until it is golden brown in colour. The “left overs” may take a little less time than this.

Allow to cool somewhere that will make the neighbours jealous.

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Warm Tapioca & Fruit Pudding



This dish, though inspired by the myriad of tapioca pearl desserts available throughout Asia, was created to suit the cold weather of an Australian winter and the need to be able to throw together a pudding with hardly any ingredients. Keep a packet of sago/tapioca pearls in your pantry and then all you need is a can or two of tinned fruit and some dried fruit to make all manner of pudding combinations.

Ingredients:

2 tins of fruit in juice (crushed pineapple, plums, apricots, apples etc)

4 tbs sago or tapioca pearls

1/2 cup dried fruit like chopped apricots, dates, currents, raisins, sultanas

Place the ingredients in a baking dish and stir then leave to sit overnight or for 8 hours

Bake for 2 hours at 160°C until pearls are translucent and the fruit has thickened.

Allow to cool slightly then serve with icecream.



Serving Suggestion

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Thanks!
Stuart Box

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