

# Cuisine *de* Critters

By Lisa Treen

Photography by Animax

A few weeks back I had a girlfriend over to my place for dinner; a regular weekly catch-up meal that I had cooked. Simple concept, I cook the food and you bring the wine and let's chat and have a good goss catch-up.

Talk turned to our eating and take-away behaviours. My friend is more of a take-away person when she knows her hubby is working late—that's quite a few nights a week. I'm more of a cook every night kind of gal and I make use of left-overs the next day for a quick heat and eat lunch at the office.

I seek out recipes that use very little processed ingredients and I tend to slip into a supermarket or local butcher each day for that evening's meal. I have a tiny freezer so there's no real room to have a lot of food stored in there. There's also a stack of liver treats for dogs in there so that minimises the amount of food that can be stashed.

A few years back I had what can only be described as a foodies nightmare. I had some weirdy food allergy and was put on an elimination diet in order to re-set my body and figure out what I might be allergic to. The restrictions on what I couldn't eat far outweighed what I could. For a food-fan, this was punishing. But it was something I had to address because I had a constant state of hives and 'other stuff' going on inside of me that you all don't need to know.

Additives and preservatives were all expelled from my diet and some vegies, fruit and cornerstones of my normal diet were also discarded. I'm sure I became quite boring at any friend's birthday celebration at a restaurant when I listed the small amount of food and ingredients I could have. Some waiters would roll their eyes; one waitress even went so far as to tell me and all at my table that, "I should live a little." I was turning from a foodie into a food-bore and no one like those, even if there's a valid dietary reason.

I guess that's why I tend to make things from scratch as Americans would say. Meaning, I very rarely use packet stuff or canned goods that have preservatives and additives in them. Trouble with all this cooking healthy and hearty food from scratch is that I tend to follow recipes that feed four. There's rarely a recipe I find that's just for one or for one with the possibility of some left-over's for lunch tomorrow.

The dogs hang around the kitchen when I cook and when you break a few of your recipes down, you'll find that many of the core ingredients are a great add-on to their normal food. Problem of excess or surplus food solved. All you have to do is follow some simple rules—like omitting any onions and excess garlic for their portion. If the recipe requires wine then simply add this at the end for your portion or omit totally. Go light on the salt too. I recently tried omitting any added salt from all my recipes and it works wonders in lowering your blood pressure.

Cooking is made all the better when you can share and that's what these recipes are designed to do. Share with a friend and share with your furry ones too.

*“Cooking is made all the better when you can share and that's what these recipes are designed to do.”*



## Honey Baked Pumpkin Grrr-isotto

*This is a lovely dish to cook and the ginger not only smells delicious but it's great for tender tummies. Omit the white wine until you've portioned out your dog serving.*

### Ingredients:

- 900g pumpkin, peeled and cut into 1cm cubes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon honey (try to find Australian honey – the better the grade, the better the taste)
- 850ml vegetable stock
- 2 celery stalks, finely chopped
- 2cm piece ginger, peeled and then grated
- 1 cup arborio rice
- 2/3 cup white wine **\*\*remember to add this to human portion at end\*\***
- Juice 1/2 lemon
- 1/2 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley, plus extra to garnish

### Method:

Preheat oven to 220°C or 210°C in fan forced oven

Lay peeled and chopped pumpkin in a single, even layer on a large baking tray and drizzle with 1 TBS olive oil. Roast for 15 minutes, then remove and drizzle with 1/2 TBS of honey. Roast for a further 15 minutes until cooked and golden.

Place stock in a small to medium saucepan and keep at a simmer over very low heat.

Heat remaining oil in a large heavy-based pan over low heat. Add celery and cook for 1 minute until just a little soft. Add ginger and rice and cook for a further minute stirring to coat grains.

Increase heat to medium-low and add stock 1 ladle at a time, allowing it to be absorbed before adding another. Continue for 15 minutes or until rice is cooked but still firm to the bite. Add lemon juice, pumpkin and parsley and stir gently.

Portion out your doggie amount and then add in the wine for a gentle simmer for the human amount. Serve with a sprinkle of parsley to garnish.

## Cheesy Salmon Bark & Meow Bake

Super nice for humans, super nice for the household budget and super nice for your dogs and cats. Since you're the cook, you should keep the lion's share of the cheesy topping. This makes a great winter meal and modern methods of cooking rice should spend up the process.

### Ingredients:

- 30g butter
- 2 tablespoons plain flour
- 2 cups milk
- 1 1/2 cups grated tasty cheese
- 415g can red salmon, bones and skin removed, flaked
- 1/2 cup frozen peas
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon rind
- 3 cups cooked white long-grain rice (save time & grab the microwaveable Sunrice brand from your supermarket shelves)
- Chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, to garnish

### Method:

Preheat oven to 180°C or 160C for fan forced oven

Melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat until foaming. Add flour. Cook, stirring with a wooden spoon, for 1 minute or until bubbling. Remove from heat. Add milk, 1/4 cup at a time, stirring constantly. Return pan to heat. Cook, stirring, for 5 minutes or until mixture bubbles and thickens. Remove from heat. Stir in 1/2 cup cheese.

Combine salmon, peas and lemon rind in a bowl. Spread half the rice over the base of a greased deep, 24cm (base) square baking dish. Arrange half the salmon mixture over rice. Spoon over half the sauce and half the remaining cheese. Repeat layers with remaining rice, salmon, sauce and cheese. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until golden. Stand for 5 minutes. Serve with parsley. Make sure the fur kids portion is just on room temperature. Add pepper to the human portion.



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