

Taste

Stacks of fun



Eating in

Judith Sweet

HAPPY Mother's Day to all mothers for Sunday. For those fortunate enough to have family nearby, many will be treated to a special meal at some stage of the day — and if you help out with a meal, don't forget the washing up!

Breakfast in bed is a great way to begin a special day but it does take some skill to produce the perfect breakfast.

Hot toast with melting butter, a piping hot cup of tea (made to mother's taste — not too strong, not too weak but just right), maybe poached or boiled eggs, with the yolks done to her liking, sounds easy to do but takes exact timing.

If you plan to try the perfect breakfast, get things organised. Make sure the pillows on the bed are plumped up and that there are plenty of them so mum can rest luxuriously and be comfortable while enjoying her treat.

Prepare a tray with the best china, a large napkin and perhaps a flower. If you plan to serve freshly squeezed orange juice, refrigerate the oranges overnight so the juice will be refreshingly chilled. If you have a juicer, you might like to whip up a glass of mother's favourite combination, such as a tall chilled glass of fresh apple and carrot juice.

If toast sounds a bit mundane, go for warm bagels or oven-crisped croissants. Cream cheese and Tasmanian smoked salmon make a delicious filling or mum's favourite jam.

A real treat would be American hotcakes, which are rather like a thick crepe or big pikelet. They're much easier to prepare than crepes, are light and delicious and can be topped with butter and honey or maple syrup. If you're planning to use maple syrup, it is worth the extra cost to buy the real thing. In America, I believe hotcakes are also sometimes served with crispy bacon and eggs. You'll realise where the saying "They sell like hotcakes" came from when you produce these.

We've been making basic hotcakes for almost 30 years in my family and everyone loves them. The following recipe makes about 12 of them 10-12cm across. They cook well in a large frying pan or electric frying pan.

Half a cup of fruit, such as diced banana, apple or sultanas, can be added to the mixture along with a dash of cinnamon or nutmeg if you wish.

Keep the hotcakes warm while you finish cooking the batch and serve them immediately.

As with most pancake mixtures, they are at their best if the batter is made in advance. You



can make that the night before and add the baking powder just before cooking. If you're not preparing them overnight, self-raising flour can be used, rather than the plain flour-baking powder combination.

You may need to soften the mixture with a little more milk. To be sure you don't forget the baking powder, write yourself a note or write it on the plastic wrap on the refrigerated mixture.

Buttermilk may be substituted for whole milk and gives lightness to the mixture.

The butter can be quickly melted in the microwave oven.

Basic American hotcakes

1½ cups plain flour

1¾ tsp baking powder

1 good pinch salt

2 tbsp sugar

2 large free-range eggs

1¼ cups milk

2 tbsp melted butter or lightly flavoured vegetable oil

NOTE: Omit baking powder if using self-raising flour.

Sift together the flour, baking powder and salt and stir in the sugar. Combine together the eggs and milk and mix into the flour mixture. Stir well until blended. Beat in the melted butter. Allow to stand, in the

refrigerator, for at least 30 minutes. Heat the frying pan and grease lightly. Drop about a quarter of a cup of the mixture on to the hot surface and cook until bubbles appear on the top. Using a metal spatula, turn the hotcakes over and cook the other side. Repeat until all the mixture is used.

Simple breakfast ideas

■ Combine half a teaspoon of cinnamon with a teaspoon of sugar and sprinkle over hot buttered toast or toasted raisin bread.

■ Prepare a fruit platter with grapes, strawberries and sliced banana and accompany with a bowl of natural stirred yoghurt drizzled with honey.

■ Top toasted crumpets with relish and grated cheese and pop under the grill to melt.

■ Fold slices of smoked salmon through creamy scrambled eggs.

■ Make French toast by dipping sliced bread in a mixture of milk and egg. In a heated buttered frying pan, "toast" the bread on both sides until it's golden. Sprinkle with combined cinnamon and sugar and serve immediately.

■ Use an electric sandwich maker for toasted sandwiches with mother's favourite filling.

■ Raisin bread with sliced apple makes an interesting breakfast sandwich.



Tasty Bits

Saucy advances

OVER summer and autumn they've processed 3.5 tonnes of local tomatoes at the Tasmanian Gourmet Sauce Company at Evandale. Tomato Relish and Tomato Kasoundi have been on the production run for a while but tomato requirements have stepped up with the launching last week of three pasta sauces.

Julie Barbour at the sauce company and her friend Pasqualina Bergamin "dissected and discussed" Bergamin's family recipe for pasta and she helped develop the three variations: Olive and Capers, Sundried Tomatoes and Basil and Arrabiata (chilli).

The sauces are cooked slowly for almost three hours in small, 6kg batches, which results in a rich, complex flavour. They have the slick of olive oil and cling to pasta exactly as they should. The jars of 550g contain enough to coat four serves of pasta. D.S. Trading is the distributor and the pasta sauces are available at specialist grocers and delis this week. Expect to pay a premium price.

A head of steam

STEAMING frozen vegetables is a much more effective way of treating them than stir-frying, which makes them spit hot oil. Now Birds Eye has launched frozen steamed vegetables that require no steamer, just a microwave.

Steam Fresh takes the convenience of frozen vegetables a step further — there is nothing to clean up. The vegetables cook in their own steam bag which has a vent to allow the steam to slowly escape during cooking. Cooked this way, vegetables maintain the most vitamins and minerals possible and stay firm. Each packet, which sells for about \$3.50, contains three 200g pouches of a different vegetable — peas, corn and beans; carrot, cauliflower and broccoli; peas, corn and carrot; or cauliflower, broccoli and mixed vegetables.

On a huge hop

LENAH Game and Gourmet has survived and thrived since Woolworths supermarkets Sydney buyers decided not to stock the Launceston company's wallaby meat any longer in Tasmanian supermarkets.

In the 12 months since, sales through Coles supermarkets have improved by 215 per cent on the volume previously sold to both chains, says proprietor John Kelly. Restaurants here and in eastern mainland states are also big customers for wallaby meat.

ELAINE REEVES



Before We Eat
a delicious slice of
Tasmania's culinary
life is the perfect

Mother's Day tasty treat

Before We Eat... is a fascinating and fun 328-page bicentennial collectors publication that, for the first time, charts the journey of food and drink in Tasmania from the wild to the table and from the past to the present.

Before We Eat...also includes 55 award winning photographic portraits of hospitality industry identities along with their fascinating stories.

This Mother's Day special includes a free box of Cadbury's chocolates. (*while stocks last)

Available from most book retailers, Habitat and Wursthau stores or discounted with *free delivery through www.culinaryhotel.com (*conditions apply)