

Baby aubergines, braised greens and lamb with peppers: Yotam Ottolenghi's recipes for slow-cooked winter warmers

Take your time, and the flavours of protein, vegetables and sauce will all blend and marry, so feel the heat and go slow



[Yotam Ottolenghi](#)

Sat 13 Jan 2024 03.00 EST

It's hard to celebrate the joys of slow-cooked food without using certain

words: meld and mellow, say, and melt and mingle. But whenever we put everything in a pan and put that pan on the stovetop or in the oven, clichés just can't be avoided. Time transforms the ingredients, the flavours of those ingredients intermingle, and you return minutes or hours later to the wonder that is slow-cooked food. Magic, marvellous, miraculous.

Red pepper-braised lamb neck with preserved lemon salsa (pictured top)

This dish, which is inspired by Turkish pepper paste-marinated lamb and features tender, fall-apart meat, melting potatoes and sweet onion and fennel wedges, is well worth the wait. For ease, we've swapped the traditional Turkish pepper paste for jarred red peppers, which do an equally good job of imparting a pepper flavour that really benefits from the long cooking.

Prep **35 min**

Cook **3 hr**

Serves **6-8**

1kg lamb neck, cut into 5cm chunks

2 tbsp olive oil

3 tsp fennel seeds, toasted and roughly crushed in a mortar

3 tsp cumin seeds, toasted and roughly crushed in a mortar

2 tsp ground kashmiri chilli, or regular paprika

1 x 450g jar red peppers, drained (260g)

40g tomato paste

1 red chilli

Fine sea salt and black pepper

1 cinnamon stick

1 preserved lemon (40g), pips discarded, flesh and skin finely chopped

3 onions, peeled and cut into quarters (540g)

2 garlic bulbs, 1cm cut off the top of each, to expose the cloves inside

1kg fennel bulbs, stems trimmed and discarded, then each bulb cut into 6 wedges

600g baby potatoes, peeled and left whole

6 small romano peppers (300g)

6 çarli peppers (300g), or use 300g more romano peppers

For the preserved lemon salsa

50g coriander leaves

60ml olive oil

2 preserved lemons (60g), pips removed

2½ tbsp lemon juice

In a very large bowl, mix the lamb with the oil, to coat. Put a large frying pan on high heat and, once smoking, sear the lamb in batches for two to three minutes on each side, then return to the bowl.

Heat the oven to 180C (160C fan)/350F/gas 4. Put the ground fennel and cumin seeds, kashmiri chilli, jarred peppers, tomato paste and red chilli in the large bowl of a food processor, add a tablespoon of salt and a good grind of black pepper, then blitz smooth. Scrape this mix into the bowl, add the cinnamon, preserved lemon, onions, garlic, fennel, potatoes, romano and çarli peppers (if using), and mix well. Transfer the lamb mix to a large, high-sided roasting pan in which it fits snugly, then cover tightly with foil. Roast for two and a half to three hours, giving the mix a gentle stir once halfway, until the lamb is tender and falls apart easily.

Meanwhile, put all the salsa ingredients and a half-teaspoon of salt in the small bowl of a food processor, blitz until almost smooth, then transfer to a bowl.

To serve, arrange the peppers on top of the lamb, drizzle over two tablespoons of the salsa and serve with the rest of the salsa on the side.

Baby aubergines with amba and tahini



Yotam Ottolenghi's baby aubergines with amba and tahini.

These work well with all sorts of meals, either as a starter, or as part of a spread, or just as a main course with plain rice. They're also incredibly delicious piled into a pitta with as many fresh herbs as you can fit in. Once

made, these aubergines keep well, too, for up to three weeks in the fridge, if covered in oil, which gives you plenty of time to experiment. We've made a cheat's version of *amba*, a tangy, sweet mango condiment, but if you see a jar of ready-made, by all means use that instead.

Prep **35 min**

Cook **2 hr**

Serves **6**

3 onions (600g), peeled and thinly sliced

6 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced

250ml olive oil

2 tbsp hawaij spice, or other spice mix such as garam masala or baharat

Fine sea salt

1kg baby aubergines, slit open lengthways, but not all the way through and with stems still attached

100g hot mango pickle

10g coriander leaves, roughly chopped

For the lemony tahini

40ml tahini

2 tbsp lemon juice

Heat the oven to 220C (200C fan)/425F/gas 7. Put the onions, garlic, olive oil, hawaij spice and a half-teaspoon of salt in a 33cm x 27cm high-sided oven tray and mix well to coat. Cover tightly with foil, then bake for 30 minutes, stirring once halfway.

Take the tray out of the oven, stir in the aubergines and a teaspoon of salt. Cover again with foil and bake for another hour and 30 minutes, stirring gently every 30 minutes, until the aubergines have softened but are still holding their shape.

Meanwhile, put the mango pickle in the small bowl of a food processor, add 100ml water and blitz smooth.

Put the tahini in a small bowl with the lemon juice, a tablespoon of water and a quarter-teaspoon of salt, mix well and set aside.

To assemble, transfer the aubergines and their oil to a high-sided platter, spoon some of the amba over the top, followed by three tablespoons of the tahini. Scatter the coriander on top, and serve with the rest of the amba and tahini sauce on the side.

Braised greens with chickpeas and almonds

Yotam Ottolenghi's braised greens with chickpeas and almonds.

This is inspired by *espinacas con garbanzos*, an Andalusian tapa in which spinach and chickpeas are bound in a sauce made with fried bread, almonds and sherry vinegar. Tomatoes are traditional, but I find that yoghurt, which brings a similar freshness and acidity, works really well, too. Serve warm or at room temperature on the day of cooking or, so the flavours meld and mellow even further, the next day.

Prep **10 min**

Cook **50 min**

Serves **2-4**

130ml olive oil

2 green chillies, stalks discarded, cut in half lengthways, pith and seeds removed, and flesh finely chopped

1 small head garlic, cloves separated, peeled and crushed (40g)

1¼ tsp sweet smoked paprika

600g mixed greens (kale, cavolo nero and chard, say), hard stems

removed, leaves roughly chopped

Salt

1 x 400g can chickpeas, drained and rinsed

45g crustless white bread (preferably stale), torn into roughly 3cm pieces

20g blanched whole almonds

1 tsp cumin seeds, lightly crushed in a mortar

4 tsp sherry or red-wine vinegar

50g Greek-style yoghurt

Put 85ml of the oil in a large saucepan for which you have a lid, and set it over a medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, add the chillies, garlic and three-quarters of a teaspoon of paprika and stir-fry for 30 seconds. Stir in the greens and a teaspoon and a quarter of salt, cover and cook, stirring occasionally, for 20 minutes, until the greens have softened and are starting to collapse. Add the chickpeas and 200ml water and cook, still covered, for another 20 minutes, until the chickpeas are soft but still hold their shape, the greens have cooked down and most of the liquid has been absorbed. Set aside.

Meanwhile, put a tablespoon of oil in a large frying pan on a medium heat. Once hot, add the bread and fry, stirring often, for a minute. Add the almonds and cook for another two minutes, until both the nuts and the bread are golden brown. Add another tablespoon of oil, a half-teaspoon of the ground cumin and a quarter-teaspoon of smoked paprika, and fry, stirring often, until the spices are fragrant and coating the bread. Take off the heat, leave to cool, then tip into the small bowl of a food processor and add 100ml water and the vinegar. Blitz to a rough paste, scrape this into the greens pan and cook on a medium heat, stirring regularly, for five minutes, until the greens are well coated. Add up to 200ml water, 50ml at a time, just until the mix has a loose consistency but still holds together.

Put the remaining tablespoon of oil and the remaining half-teaspoon of cumin in a small pan and cook over a medium heat for about two minutes, until hot and fragrant. Take off the heat and stir in the remaining quarter-teaspoon of paprika.

Transfer the greens to a lipped serving plate and dollop the yoghurt over the top. Use a spoon to marble the yoghurt into the greens, pour over the spiced oil and serve.