

Broccoli and stilton soup

(Serves 4)

2 tbsp butter

1 small onion, finely chopped

800ml chicken or vegetable stock

600ml milk

800g broccoli

200g stilton, crumbled

1. Cheap, very quick and easy – I love this soup. Great if you have some left over broccoli you don't know what to do with, or you have some post-Christmas stilton kicking around. I use chicken stock for additional flavour, but substitute veg stock for a vegetarian version.
2. Melt the butter in a large saucepan over a medium-low heat and add onion.
3. Fry gently until soft and golden.
4. Cut the broccoli stalks into smallish chunks.
5. Add to the pan with the softened onion, fry for a minute.
6. Add stock and milk. Bring to a simmer, then cook until the stalk is beginning to soften (how long will depend on the size).
7. Cut the head into small individual florets.
8. Once the stalk is almost tender, add the florets to the pan along with most of the Stilton, keeping a little back for garnish.
9. Stir well, bring to a simmer, cover then cook for about 5 minutes, until the cheese has melted and the florets are soft.
10. Allow to cool slightly, then puree until smooth.
11. Taste and season if necessary.
12. Divide between bowls and top with the remaining cheese.
13. This one will freeze well if you want to make it ahead of time or you want to make a bigger batch

Smoked mackerel pâté

3 hot smoked mackerel fillets

150g cream cheese

Horseradish Sauce

Lemon, to squeeze

1. Quick, easy, delicious and so much better than anything you can buy ready made!
2. Skin the mackerel fillets and do a quick check for any bones – they're not unknown.
3. Flake the fish into a bowl with the cream cheese mix well.
4. Add a good desert spoon of horseradish, a good squeeze of lemon juice and a generous grind of black pepper
5. At this point it's down to personal taste. If you like you pate a little hotter add some more horseradish. If you like a little more sharpness add some more lemon.
6. If you have any double cream to hand a little splash can smooth the pate a little and make it more luxurious.
7. It shouldn't need salt, but add a little if you feel it needs it.
8. Serve with some fresh French bread, toast or some part baked rolls.
9. This also freezes really well so you can make it ahead of time and freeze or make a bigger quantity and freeze some of it down.