



Blanket banquet

Max Halley is here to, in his words, 'blow the doors off the picnic', with his raucous reinvention of what can be classed as 'picnic food' in **Max's Picnic Book**.
Pictures by **Louise Hagger**.

Steak tartare

This is a sensational recipe, whether you're making it at home or out and about. If you want to tartare at your picnic and haven't successfully persuaded your butcher to chop the meat up for you, you'd better have a penknife in that kitbag and have remembered a chopping board.

MAKES ENOUGH FOR 8-10 LETTUCE CUPS

Ingredients

- 200g beef (ideally something lean, such as fillet)
- 2 little gem lettuces, leaves separated
- Seasoning ingredients
- 1 shallot, finely diced
- 1 teaspoon white wine vinegar or lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon capers, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon Dijon mustard
- Optional extras: 1 egg yolk, a small handful of chopped parsley and a dash of Tabasco sauce

METHOD

Chop your steak at home, add all the seasoning ingredients and mix well, then store in an airtight container until you are ready to eat. If you are heading out on a hot day, you might not want to carry a bag full of raw meat. On such a day, it's a good idea to mix all the seasoning ingredients at home and take them with you in a little tub. While out and about, purchase your chosen piece of steak from a butcher, ask them to finely chop (never mince) the meat

for you, and then mix the seasonings into the meat just before you eat. Either way, when the time comes, simply spoon the tartare into the lettuce cups and serve with the optional extras alongside.

Green chilli – for the perfect hot dog

Swear down, this is a sensational chilli

recipe in its own right, regardless of the presence of a certain iconic sausage. In the UK, we are hardwired to think of chilli as a thick, rich, tomato-y chilli con carne type thing, but it doesn't have to be like that. This little beauty is herb-heavy and, as a result, the finished chilli is drier and more fragrant than you might expect. It's a spicy little number, too, which works well with a nice smoked frank in a bun, helped along with a zigzag of mustard and ketchup. Never mind the hot dog; it would be fantastic served with rice, a load of shredded spring onions, some sour cream, maybe a cheeky bit of guacamole and a big squeeze of lime. It's badass either way.

MAKES ENOUGH FOR 8 DOGS

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 500g minced pork – preferably nice and fatty, at least 10 per cent fat content
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 onion, roughly chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, grated
- 2 green peppers, deseeded and roughly chopped



- 6 green chillies, finely sliced
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 large handful of parsley, leaves picked and chopped
- 1 large handful of coriander, leaves picked and chopped
- 1 large handful of mint, leaves picked and chopped
- 2 large tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 8 cooked hot dogs, to serve
- 8 hot dog buns, to serve

METHOD

Place a heavy-based saucepan over a high heat and add the olive oil. When it's nice and hot, add your pork and salt and roughhouse it with a wooden spoon. You want to press it against the pan and create a nice flat layer. Leave this for a full minute

to crisp and brown, then roughhouse again, pressing the meat against the pan and leaving it for another full minute. Do this once more, then it's time to start adding layers of flavour.

Add the onion, garlic, green peppers and chillies and stir into the meat. Keep the heat high, as you want the onions and veg to catch and char. Stir occasionally.

When brown flecks start appearing on your veg, add the oregano and all the fresh herbs, stirring to combine. Next add the chopped tomatoes, including all the juice they've left behind on the board, then stir in the vinegar and bring to the boil.

Now you can reduce the heat to a very gentle simmer and cook the chilli for 30 minutes. The chilli will be quite dry, but you want that, so don't be alarmed. Give it a taste and adjust the seasoning, adding a little extra salt or vinegar to your preference. Allow to cool slightly and hot dog your way into the sunset.

Battenberg cake

Gosh how good is Battenberg cake? It is fiddly to make though, as you can see from the lovely wonk in the one Ben made in the photo. If you're even a little baking-phobic, or easily annoyed, just buy one. If you do, however, have the time, inclination and patience, you will be amply rewarded.

MAKES 1 CAKE

Ingredients

- 150g butter, at room temperature, plus extra to grease
- 150g caster sugar
- 2 large free-range eggs
- 150g self-raising flour
- 2 drops red food colouring
- 3-4 tablespoons raspberry jam, for spreading
- 400g shop-bought marzipan

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 180C/gas 4 and grease and line a small baking tray,

roughly 24cm x 18cm x 5cm. Using foil, create a firm barrier down the middle of the tray, to make sure the batters don't run into each other.

As with so many good classic cakes, you need to start by creaming together the butter and sugar until they are pale and fluffy, almost white. This is easiest done in a stand mixer or with a hand whisk and may take as long as five minutes. Next, mix in the eggs, one at a time, ensuring that the first one is fully incorporated before adding the next. Finally, ditch the whisk and, using a large metal spoon, gently fold in the flour.

Add half the cake mixture into one half of the baking tray. Now add the red food colouring to the other half of the mixture in the bowl and combine thoroughly, then carefully spoon this pink cake mixture into the other half of the baking tray.

Bake for 30 minutes or

until a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean. Remove the cakes from the oven and allow to cool in the tin for a couple of minutes before turning out onto a wire rack and leaving to cool fully.

Meanwhile, roll out your marzipan into a perfect square, roughly 30cm x 30cm and about 3mm thick, then keep it covered with a clean tea towel.

Now all that's left to do is the assembly. Cut the two coloured sections of cake in half lengthways and trim the edges to give you four neat, similar-sized strips. Spread each strip of cake with raspberry jam on all sides and sandwich them together in alternating pairs. Lay the sandwiched cakes in the centre of your marzipan rectangle and roll the whole thing tightly. Finally, sit the cake on a board so the seam is underneath and trim off any excess. Voila!

Make some tea, slice a good chunk of Battenberg and sit back, smug as you like.

■ **Max's Picnic Book** by **Max Halley & Ben Benton (Hardie Grant, £16.99)** is out now. **Photography by Louise Hagger.**





PENKNIFE SPECIAL: Main picture, steak tartare; bottom left, green chilli hot dogs; bottom right, Battenberg cake.

