

Toad-in-the-Hole with Caramelised Onion Gravy

Serves 4

Ingredients

140g plain flour
4 large eggs
300ml low fat milk
1 Tbsp wholegrain mustard
Handful of parsley finely chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
2 Tbsp vegetable oil
8 rashers smoked bacon (optional)
8 sausages (chicken or beef)
2 red onions, cut into wedges
Your favourite green vegetables to serve (sautéed cabbage, peas or beans)
Mash (optional) to serve

For the gravy:

Drizzle of veg oil
2 red onions, halved and thinly sliced
1 Tbsp caster sugar
2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
2 Tbsp plain flour
250ml red wine (optional)
500ml (or 750 ml if not using red wine) chicken or beef stock

Method

1. Put flour into a large jug or bowl. Crack in the eggs, one at a time, whisking as you do. Pour in the milk, continue whisking until batter is smooth and lump-free. Add mustard, herbs and some seasoning, cover and set aside for 2 hours, or chill overnight.
2. Heat oven to 220°C/200°C fan/Gas 7. Heat oil in a large metal roasting tin or enamel baking dish, roughly 30 x 22 cm, with high-ish sides. Wrap bacon slices around sausages (if using), pop sausages into the dish with the onion wedges. Place on the middle shelf of the oven (make sure top shelf is removed to allow batter to rise later). Cook 15-20 minutes until sausages are sizzling and browning.
3. Meanwhile, make the gravy. Drizzle a little oil in a saucepan. Add sliced onions, cook slowly for 15 minutes. Stir every now and then until soft and caramelised. Add sugar and vinegar, cook for 5 minutes or more until sticky.

4. The batter should have the consistency of double cream, but if it has become too thick, add a splash of cold water. Take batter to oven, open the door, carefully pull out the shelf and quickly pour the batter around the sausages. Close the door and do not open again for at least 25 minutes.
5. To finish the gravy, stir flour into the onions to make a paste, cooking 1-2 minutes. Continue stirring while you splash in the wine or 250 ml of stock, a little at a time, until you have a smooth, thick sauce. Increase the heat and bubble for a few minutes until reduced by half, then add the rest of the stock, continue bubbling for 10 minutes more.
6. The toad should be puffed up, golden and deep brown by the end of the cooking time – if not, continue cooking, but don't open the oven or it will sink. Sprinkle with chopped parsley, and serve with gravy, vegetables and mash.