

A question of balance

Joanne Wood shares healthy, tasty recipes from her inspirational blog The Balanced Kitchen



AFTER A life-changing medical experience, Joanne Wood decided to have a complete overhaul of her diet.

Through this process she discovered a love of food, and food photography, and documented her journey on her blog, and Instagram page, The Balanced Kitchen.

Joanne's love of healthy food, and passion for photography, has led to her now working with companies as a recipe designer and photographer.

Joanne says that, for her, food is about much more than sustenance and she believes it can bring creativity, colour, health and happiness to our lives. Here she shares some of her recipes, more of which can be found at: (thebalancedkitchen.co.uk).

Turmeric, thyme and tomato with red onion vegan quiche

This showstopper of a tart doubles up as a nutritional powerhouse of a main course.

BASE

- 200g buckwheat flour
- 150g oats
- 100g hazelnuts ground
- 40g sesame seeds
- 100g coconut oil melted
- ½ cup gram flour
- 1 tbsp xylitol sugar alternative (available as Total Sweet, see box on page 73)
- ½ cup water
- 1 grind sea salt

FILLING

- 1 block firm tofu 396g net weight, drain
- 150g gram flour
- 250ml water
- 1½ tsp wholegrain mustard
- 30g cup nutritional yeast flakes

- ½ tsp kala namak salt optional
- 1 clove garlic peeled
- 1 tbsp of turmeric

TOPPING

- A selection of your choice of tomatoes - enough to cover the surface of the quiche. I used five to six of different sizes. Slice larger ones and halve the smaller ones.
- 2 red onions sliced

EXTRA

- 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 5 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 tbsp sesame seeds

BASE

1 Process the hazelnuts to a fine crumb texture in a food processor. You could sub the hazelnuts for almonds or ground almonds

2 Then pour the ground hazelnuts into a large bowl and add the buckwheat flour, oats, sesame seeds, gram flour and salt

3 Melt the coconut oil gently in a pan and add the xylitol. Gradually pour the melted mixture over the flour mixture and work quickly with a spoon to mix until you reach a crumb-like texture and no dry flour remains - scrape down the sides of the bowl until all ingredients are combined

4 Now, add the water and continue to stir and combine well. Pour the mixture into the flan baking dish (my dish measures 35cm diameter - adjust the quantity of the ingredients to suit your size of dish)

5 Press the mixture flat and up the sides of the dish until evenly spread. Smooth out with the back of a spoon. Bake the base blind (without the filling) in a pre-heated oven for ten minutes. Remove from the oven ready for the filling.

FILLING

1 While the base is baking in the oven. Wash out the food processor jug (if used from the hazelnuts). Add the drained tofu, gram flour, mustard, nutritional yeast flakes, kala namak salt (if using), garlic, turmeric and water. Process until smooth

2 Pour the filling into the base and smooth out using the back of a spoon or spatula. Top with the sliced red onion and tomatoes, ensuring the topping is generous enough to provide maximum flavour per slice!

3 Bake in the oven for a further 20 to 25 minutes until baked through and turning golden

4 Remove from the oven and add sprigs of fresh thyme, a drizzle of balsamic vinegar and a scattering of sesame seeds before serving. Serve alone or with green salad leaves.

SERVES SIX



SERVES SIX

Pea, mint and toasted pine nut pate

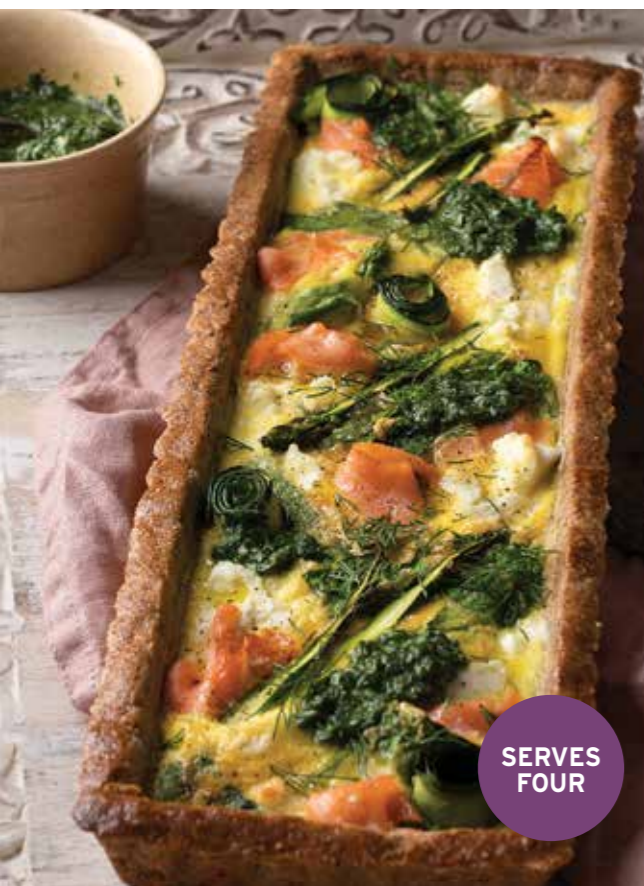
This colourful pate tastes as fresh as it looks.

- 1 small brown onion, peeled, diced small
- 150g fresh or frozen peas (thawed), reserve some for serving (optional)
- 400g tin of chickpeas, rinsed (drained weight 230g)
- Large handful fresh spinach, washed
- 2 large cloves garlic, peeled
- 50g tahini paste
- salt and pepper
- Large sprig of fresh mint leaves, washed - reserve some for serving
- 20g pine nuts, lightly toasted
- Small handful dill and sesame seeds for serving

1 Place the diced onion with a dash of oil or water into a small frying pan with a lid and cook over a low heat until they become soft and translucent (five to ten minutes)

2 Remove the cooked onions from the heat and pour into a food processor. Add the peas, drained chickpeas, spinach, garlic, tahini, seasoning and mint leaves (reserve some for serving if desired). Pulse until smooth and creamy

3 Transfer the mixture into a serving dish and top with the toasted pine nuts, extra mint leaves, dill and sesame seeds. Serve with breadsticks or raw, sliced vegetables. Please note: pates are not recommended for pregnant women



SERVES FOUR

◀ Salmon and spring greens tart with a walnut and almond pastry crust

This tart showcases some of our best Spring ingredients. Serve with dill pesto (recipe below) and simple steamed vegetables or salad leaves.

(Gluten-free)

FOR THE BASE

- 100g walnuts
- 100g ground almonds
- 150g buckwheat flour
- 100g unsalted butter (or vegan spread)
- 1 tbsp xylitol sugar alternative (available as Total Sweet) (see box)
- pinch of salt
- 1 egg beaten (or 2 tbsp ground flax seeds)

1 Place the walnuts into a food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Add the ground almonds, buckwheat flour, butter (or vegan spread), xylitol and salt. Pulse until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs

2 Next, add the beaten egg (or ground flax seeds) and a splash of ice-cold water and pulse a couple of times, just until the mixture comes

together. The mixture will still be a little crumbly at this point but turn out the mixture onto a floured surface and knead gently until it comes together a bit more. Then wrap in clingfilm and leave to chill and rest in the fridge for about 30 to 60 minutes

3 Place the chilled pastry onto a clean board, dusted with flour and use a rolling pin to gently roll out the pastry to a length on width to fit your baking tin, with enough to leave some to go up the sides of the tin

4 Gently transfer the pastry into the baking tin and use your clean fingers to press into the shape of the tin. Using a fork, prick all over. Place the tin into the fridge for 30 minutes to set. This will prevent the pastry from shrinking during cooking

5 After chilling, place a sheet of baking paper over the pastry and then add some baking beans or some uncooked, dry rice to weigh the baking paper down. Bake the pastry in a pre-heated oven at 180 degrees C for ten minutes. Remove from the oven ready for adding the filling ingredients.

FOR THE FILLING

- 5 medium sized free-range eggs beaten
- 1 tbsp milk
- 100g smoked salmon
- 1 small courgette cut into ribbons using a peeler
- 4 asparagus tips, washed and halved lengthways
- 50g watercress, remove any thick, tough stems
- 100g feta cheese, crumbled
- salt and pepper seasoning

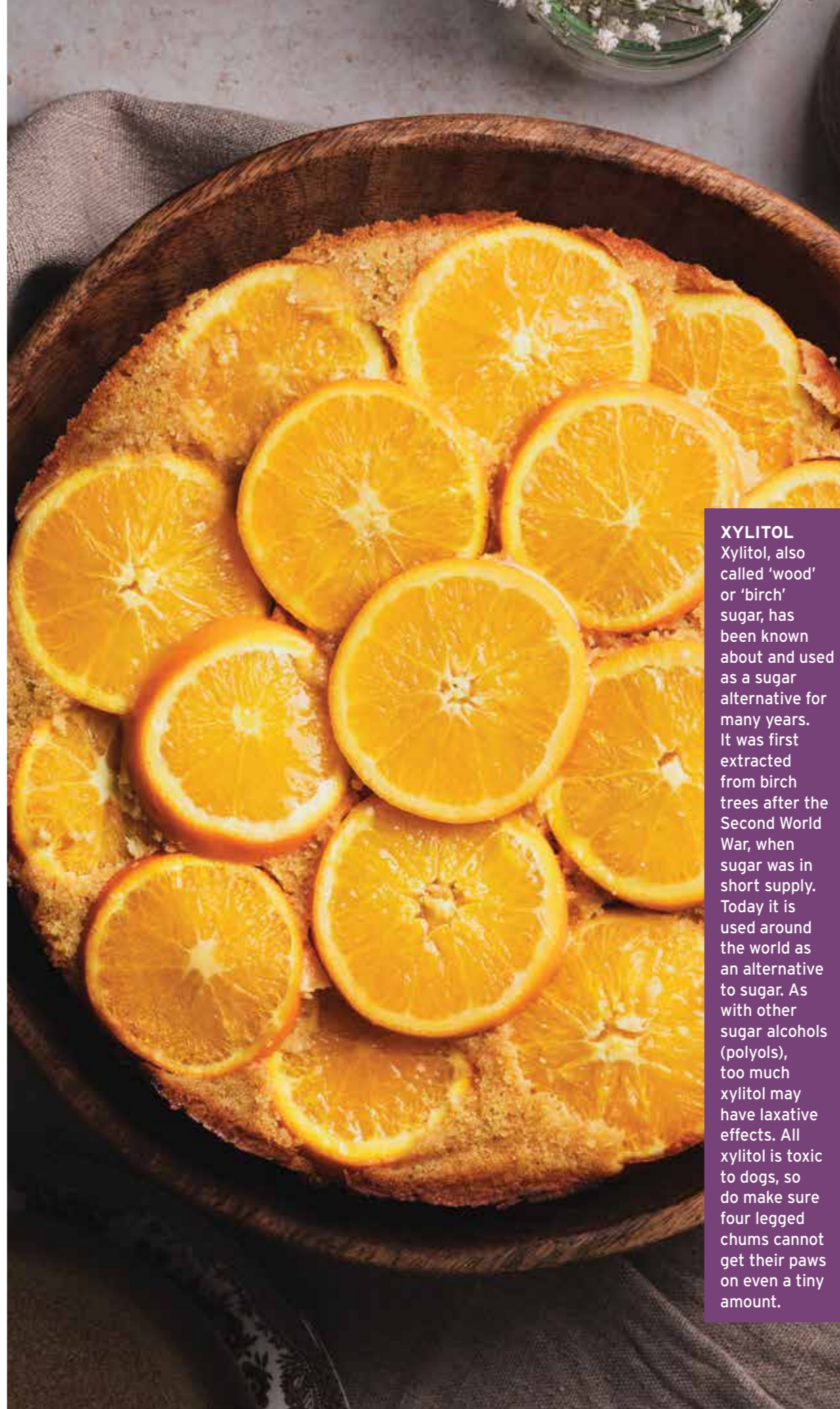
1 Mix the milk into the beaten eggs then pour the mixture into the prepared tart base

2 Next, take small amounts of the smoked salmon and pinch together, placing the salmon at even intervals within the egg mixture. Then, do the same with the courgette ribbons, asparagus tips and finally the watercress. Crumble the cheese over the dish and season well

3 Bake the tart in a preheated oven for 20 to 25 minutes. Place a piece of foil over the tart if it begins to brown on top towards the end of the cooking time. Remove from the oven and allow to cool slightly (or fully depending on choice). Serve with a drizzle of dill pesto and fresh greens.

DILL PESTO

- 30g Dill
- 20g Fresh Basil
- 4 tbsp Olive Oil
- Juice of ½ lemon
- 2 tbsp Fresh Parmesan cheese, grated
- Place all ingredients into food processor, blitz and serve.



XYLITOL

Xylitol, also called 'wood' or 'birch' sugar, has been known about and used as a sugar alternative for many years. It was first extracted from birch trees after the Second World War, when sugar was in short supply. Today it is used around the world as an alternative to sugar. As with other sugar alcohols (polyols), too much xylitol may have laxative effects. All xylitol is toxic to dogs, so do make sure four legged chums cannot get their paws on even a tiny amount.

Upside-down almond, orange and coconut cake

Keeping the feel good vibe going to the end is this beautiful desert. Light enough to ensure you don't feel too full, but still warming and comforting (until the summer sun arrives). (23cm springform tin)

- 3 small oranges – sliced thinly
- 200g softened butter (150g for the cake, 50g for oiling the baking paper)
- 100g xylitol (see box)
- 4 large eggs, beaten
- 50mls plain yoghurt
- 150g spelt wholemeal flour
- 120g ground almonds
- 2 tbsp desiccated coconut
- 2 level tsp baking powder

SERVES TEN

BASE

1 Start by lining the bottom of the tin with the baking paper. Using a clean paper towel, spread 50g of the softened butter on top of the baking paper in the tin

2 Arrange the sliced orange slices, starting from the middle and working towards the edges, overlapping as needed to cover the bottom of the tin. Set to one-side while you make the cake mixture

3 Cream the remaining softened butter and xylitol together in a bowl. Add the beaten eggs and yoghurt and whisk until incorporated

4 Next, gradually whisk in the spelt flour, ground almonds, desiccated coconut and baking powder until you reach a smooth batter consistency. Gently pour the batter on top of the arranged orange slices and spread evenly. It may help to pour the mixture in four sections and using a spatula to gently smooth the batter over the oranges, so as not to disturb them

5 Bake in a pre-heated oven at 180 degree C (160 degrees fan oven) for 45mins. Place a piece of foil over the cake during the last ten to 15 minutes if it begins to brown too much. Remove from the oven, allow to cool for 15 minutes

6 Once cooled, release the spring- release and lift away the edges from the tin. Place a plate on top of the cake and quickly turn the cake so that the oranges are now on the top. Carefully peel the baking paper off to reveal the cake. Best eaten on day of making. If you store any uneaten cake in the fridge and find it has soaked up the juice from the orange slices, you can re-heat the cake for ten to 15 minutes to help dry it out again.