



❧ GOURMET'S GUIDE TO ❧

THE FULL ENGLISH

Tom Shingler forgoes his Saturday morning lie in and sets up camp in the kitchen to create the ultimate British breakfast

A fry-up is a very personal thing. We can get pretty passionate about our eggs being scrambled or fried and whether our bacon should be crispy or soft. But there are some basic rules that everyone should adhere to for breakfast-induced bliss. Egg, sausage and bacon is the holy trinity of any plate; make sure the food is piping hot when it hits the

table and – most important of all – don't skimp on the ingredients. You're cooking everything very simply, with no added flavours or seasoning, so there's no way to mask cheap bangers and waterlogged bacon. As long as they're abided by, you can customise to your hearts content and get a really, *really* good start to the day.

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SAUSAGES

LEAVE YOUR CHILLI, CHORIZO AND SUN-DRIED TOMATO FLAVOURED SAUSAGES IN THE FRIDGE – KEEP IT SIMPLE AND STICK WITH A TRADITIONAL BANGER.

Even Cumberland, pork & leek and pork & apple varieties are bordering on the exotic. Sausages should be the first thing you cook as they take the longest, and you want to get them really crisp and browned. They can be put in the oven and left to their own devices, but you can keep a better eye on them in the pan if you've got space. Just make sure not to prick them and let all the lovely juices escape!

BACON

COOK YOUR RASHERS TO PERSONAL TASTE – CRISP OR CHEWY – BUT DON'T LET THEM BURN.

Go for streaky bacon if you like it crispy, but back bacon has more

actual meat and is the traditional choice. We can't see any reason why you would opt for unsmoked rather than smoked bacon in any culinary situation, but it's up to you!

EGGS

HERE'S WHERE YOU CAN PROPERLY START CUSTOMISING YOUR BREAKFAST.

Fried eggs themselves can be tailored to different people's tastes (runny or set yolk) but scrambling them is much easier if you're cooking for a large crowd – cook them low and slow to get a really unctuous texture. If you're not averse to boiling a pot of water and looking to impress, poached eggs mean you can show off a bit (provided they don't go disastrously wrong). Don't put yourself out by cooking eggs in different ways for different people – you'll give yourself too much work to do and increase your chances of chalky yolks, slimy whites and egg shell-studded



GRILL OR FRY?

Chucking everything into one big frying pan is the traditional method of cooking breakfast, and it means fried bread (if you're that way inclined) has plenty of flavour to soak up at the end. However, many of us now utilise the grill when we're low on space, or trying to cut the amount of fat we're eating (a fry-up is hardly health food). Tomatoes tend to crisp up better under the grill, but sausages need to be in direct contact with hot metal to achieve a proper crispy skin. While it's possible to cook everything in one pan (except the beans), you'd have trouble grilling ingredients like eggs and potato cakes, so factor in how much washing up you're willing to do before you decide on your method of choice.

scramble. Frying eggs in butter eliminates that squeaky, filmy crust you get on the bottom, and putting a lid on top of the pan will help finish off the yolk without having to flip it. Eggs should be one of the last things you cook, as they don't stand up well to being kept warm.

MUSHROOMS

NOW THAT WE'VE COVERED THE THREE CORE INGREDIENTS, WE CAN MOVE ON TO THE EXTRAS.

Large, flat mushrooms such as Portobello look great, are better suited to being grilled and have a much fleshier bite to them, but quartered button mushrooms soak up more juices from the pan and when doused in butter are an absolute treat.



BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS

THE BEST BUYS FOR A FRY-UP TO REMEMBER



1 Sheepdrove Organic Eggs, £2.10 per half dozen from Sheepdrove butchers in Bristol and Maida Vale, London.



2 Real Lancashire Black Pudding, for stockists visit reallancashireblackpuddings.co.uk



3 Grandad's Traditional Best Pork Sausages, £49.90 for 5kg from sausageshop.co.uk



4 Minnie Plus Little Demon Rosso Stuffer Sausage Making Kit, £144 from weschenfelder.co.uk



5 Tefal Optigrill, £149.99 from lakeland.co.uk

TOMATOES

THESE CAN BE COOKED ALONGSIDE THE MUSHROOMS.

Tomatoes are sweet and cut through the fatty meat well, but there's nothing worse than a half-cooked soggy one that's still raw in the middle. They take longer than you'd think to fully cook (about ten minutes) and you definitely don't want them to leak juice out onto the plate. Plum tomatoes are more fleshy than other varieties with less seeds in the middle, so stand up to frying or grilling well. Halve them, sprinkle the cut sides with salt and cook until they're nice and caramelised on the outside.

BREAD

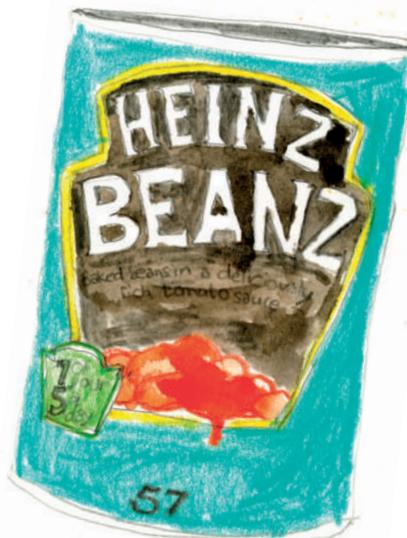
TOAST IS A MORNING STAPLE, AND A BREAKFAST WITHOUT A SLICE OR TWO WOULD FEEL A LITTLE BARE.

It doesn't take much effort to pop some bread in the toaster while you're plating up, then slathering it with lots of butter. If you're really hankering for some extra grease you can even fry it in the juices leftover in your frying pan, but this can be a step too far for a lot of people, as the bread acts as a sponge and soaks up all the leftover fat (it does taste good, though). Whichever you choose, make sure it's kept far away from any beans so it doesn't go soggy. If you've got hordes of hungry breakfasters, the grill should be able to tackle six slices at a time – no one wants cold chewy toast!

BEANS

THERE ARE SOME SCHOOLS OF SOCIETY THAT THINK BAKED BEANS HAVE NO PLACE AT A TRADITIONAL BREAKFAST (WHICH IS PERFECTLY UNDERSTANDABLE – THEY DIDN'T BECOME A FRY-UP STAPLE UNTIL AN AMERICAN HEINZ AD CAMPAIGN IN 1967).

However, we think it's nice to have something sauce-based to



loosen up the other ingredients on the plate. You could go to the effort of making your own baked beans, but to be honest, it's an awful lot of work for something that's readily available in the shops (and they'd probably taste too fancy anyway). Make sure they're cooked over a low heat for a long time so the sauce thickens up and isn't too runny when you serve them – some people like to mix the sauce with their eggs but that's down to them, so it's best to keep beans as far away from the other ingredients as possible. A sausage breakwater (à la Alan Partridge) should be implemented at the very least.

LITTLE BRITAIN

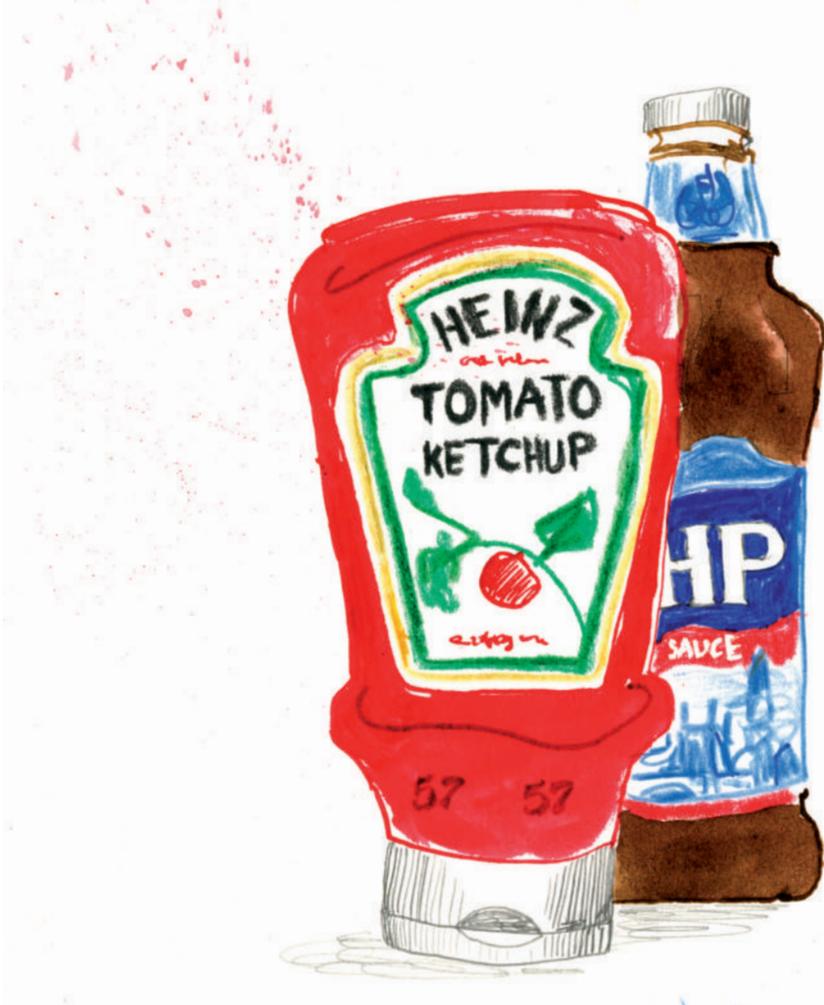
WHAT MAKES FRIED BREAKFASTS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE UK UNIQUE

Scottish – Scottish black pudding, tattie scones, occasionally Lorne sausage or haggis and oatcakes

Welsh – Laverbread and cockles

Irish – White pudding, liver, soda bread, potato farl

Cornish – Hog's pudding (a regional version of white pudding), fried potatoes or potato cakes, occasionally pilchards



“Tomato relish, homemade brown sauce and other upmarket condiments should be saved for posher occasions – you want to stick with the classics here.”

BLACK PUDDING

MANY WOULD STOP AT THE SEVEN INGREDIENTS ABOVE, BUT NOT US – THERE ARE STILL A FEW LEFT THAT CAN BE PILED ONTO THE PLATE FOR A PROPER BREAKFAST.

You don't need much of it, but the delicious richness of black pudding works in unison with the bacon and sausage so well it's a shame it's not more common on greasy spoon menus. A thick slice of a larger specimen (like those made in Stornoway) or a chopped smaller pudding (like the ones from Bury) fried will be sublime – buy it locally if you can.

POTATO CAKES

YOUR PLATE IS PROBABLY PRETTY PACKED BY NOW, BUT IF YOU CAN MAKE ROOM THEN THERE'S STILL A FINAL ITEM THAT CAN REALLY BULK OUT A BREAKFAST.

Hash browns are quite a common sight in restaurant fry-ups, but they're from the USA, usually frozen then deep fried and too much work to make from scratch. The British alternative is a potato cake (also known as a tattie scone in Scotland), which is perfect for using up leftover mash. Just heavily season it, add some flour to make it doughy, form into a patty and fry in butter until golden all over. Add spring onions to turn it into bubble and squeak if you're looking to impress.

SAUCES & DRINKS

THERE'S NOT MUCH TO SAY HERE SAUCE-WISE – HP AND TOMATO KETCHUP ARE ALL YOU NEED.

Tomato relish, homemade brown sauces and other upmarket condiments should be saved for other occasions – you want to stick with the classics here. Eating all this food is thirsty work, so to help wash it all down, a cup of strong English breakfast tea is an essential saviour. The tannic tea contrasts beautifully with the rich fat, and the caffeine helps to alleviate any post-breakfast fatigue. A tall glass of orange juice is refreshing and adds a few vitamins to the mix too.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY LOUISE ABBOTT

GOOD TIMING

A ROUGH GUIDE TO FULL ENGLISH COOKING TIMES

Sausages – 20 minutes
 Tomatoes – 10 minutes
 Mushrooms – 10 minutes
 (Portobello), 6 minutes
 (quartered)
 Black Pudding – 6 minutes

Potato Cakes – 6 minutes
 Bacon – 5 minutes
 Beans – 5 minutes, leave over
 low heat
 Eggs – 3 minutes
 Toast/Fried Bread – 3 minutes