



GOURMET'S GUIDE TO

THE SUNDAY ROAST

Tom Shingler attempts to wrangle his entire extended family into the dining room before the plates go cold for his ultimate Sunday roast

Hoist the flag and bring out the bunting – it's Sunday afternoon and time to take part in that most British of traditions – the roast dinner.

The number of families staunchly sitting at the dinner table every week is dropping, according to latest figures, so everything we can do to boost the profile

of this perfect dish has to be done. The French don't call us *rosbif* for no reason

– we need to live up to the nickname and show them why it's such an amazing feat of British cooking. So don the oven gloves, prepare to get organised and clear as much space in the kitchen as you can. Just don't, whatever you do, serve the food on cold plates.

ROASTS WITH THE MOST

OUR TOP TIPS FOR PERFECTLY COOKED MEAT

- Cook from room temperature
- Allow meat to rest for at least 20 minutes after cooking
- For large joints of lamb, beef or pork, start off at a very high temperature for 20 minutes, then drop it down to around 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.
- For crispy crackling, score the skin, make sure it's dry and salt it just before putting in the oven; do it too early and it'll leave the moisture on top.

THE CUTS



BEEF

THE PERFECT MEAT FOR ANY TIME OF YEAR, ROAST BEEF IS THE ORIGINAL AND, IN MY OPINION, BEST CHOICE FOR SUNDAY LUNCH.

Topside, silverside or sirloin joints are the most common, and a forerib with its great big bones sticking out looks like something Fred Flintstone would eat, making it a fantastic centrepiece for a special occasion. Rub it all over with mustard for a nice kick of flavour, and baste regularly. Rare meat should hit 60°C and medium is around 70°C.

PORK

PORK IS SWEET, SALTY AND HAS A GREAT TEXTURE – BUT LET'S BE HONEST, WE'RE COOKING IT FOR THE CRACKLING. A slow roasted pork shoulder ensures the meat falls apart when you so much as give it the wrong look, and the skin on top turns brittle and crunchy, with everyone at the dinner table eyeing it up. Pork belly is easy to just bung in the oven and loin is a good choice if you don't want the oven on for five hours, and means the meat is a little more robust. Make sure the centre of the meat is 70°C before you carve it, and that there are no pink juices when you pierce it with a skewer.

CHICKEN

THE BEAUTY OF ROAST CHICKEN IS GETTING THE WHOLE BIRD, PLUMP WITH WHITE AND DARK MEAT AND ENHANCED BY LEMON, GARLIC AND HERBS. You can joint the legs and thighs after cooking, but there's something satisfying about slicing up the breast and leg

meat, then picking the rest of the meat that's harder to carve. Dry chicken is the thing to avoid here; to keep it moist, baste with the pan juices a few times during cooking, add a splash of water into the pan if it looks too dry and don't overcook it (make sure it's 75°C in the thickest part of the leg after resting).

LAMB

THE PERFECT CHOICE IN THE SPRING OR AUTUMN, BRITISH LAMB IS THE BEST IN THE WORLD AND IS GREAT FOR GETTING EVERYONE ROUND THE TABLE. A leg studded with garlic and rosemary (add anchovies too for an extra hit of umami) or a juicy, melt-in-the-mouth slow-roasted shoulder accompanied with greens, plenty of potatoes and a big dollop of mint sauce is one of our nation's crowning glories. There's always a fight over who gets the crispy bits, and usually enough left over for a nice curry or tagine later on in the week.

POTATOES

ROAST

USE A FIRM, RED SKINNED POTATO VARIETY (ROOSTER)

The undisputed champion of Sunday lunches throughout the land and, for many people, the make-or-break element of a successful roast. They're my favourite thing on the plate (whoever thought a potato could trump meat?) and most cooks won't bother serving any other carb. However, there's nothing worse than a disappointing roastie. To get that perfect contrast between crunchy exterior and light, fluffy inside causes much debate over cooking times, methods and which oil to use. This recipe from Albert Bartlett calls for half a bag of Rooster



potatoes, 100g goose fat and 3 sprigs fresh rosemary.

1 Preheat the oven to 220/Gas Mark 6 and place a tray with the goose fat in to get really hot. Peel the potatoes and cut into even sized pieces.

2 Add them to a pan of salted water and bring to the boil, then simmer for 5 minutes. Drain, then toss in the pan to roughen the edges.

3 Cover the potatoes and rosemary in the hot oil and roast for 45-50 minutes, turning halfway through cooking. Drain and serve. Simple!
albertbartlett.co.uk

BOILED

USE A WAXY POTATO VARIETY (NEW POTATOES E.G. JERSEY ROYALS)

If you're serving a fatty cut of meat and want something a little lighter than spuds cooked in fat, then boiled potatoes are a great alternative. They'll suck up any juices and gravy, and you can always throw caution to the wind and slather them with melted butter. They're also particularly good with mint sauce if you're cooking lamb.

DINNER IS SERVED
OUR TOP ROAST PRODUCTS



1 Super sharp and very attractive, this set will make short work of any roast. IO Shen Carving Set, £119.95 from kitchenknivesdirect.co.uk



5 Salt as it should be, hand-harvested with a distinctive flaky texture that lends a certain piquancy to any dish. Maldon sea salt is available from all major supermarkets, maldonsalt.co.uk



2 An instant reading means you can check when the meat's done without any doubt. Thermopen, £57.60 from thermopen.co.uk



6 Half the saturated fat of olive oil and great for roasting. Just Oil Rapeseed Oil, £8 from Tesco



3 Design, ergonomics and quality all rolled into one. Wusthof Carving Set, £210 from inthehaus.co.uk



7 A beautiful boned and rolled shoulder. Eversfield Organic Lamb Shoulder, £15.48/kg, eversfieldorganic.co.uk



4 You can't have beef without horseradish – and this sauce is the best. The Condiment Co Horseradish Sauce, £2.25 from thecondimentco.co.uk



8 These kits from Potts' add a sophisticated twist to roasts and are available in five variants: Beef, Lamb, Pork, Chicken and Turkey. £5.00, more info at info@pottspartnerhip.co.uk.



VEGETABLES

BROCCOLI

Fresh, vibrant, healthy and a great addition to any roast dinner. I have no idea how this brassica got its reputation for being a dull necessity for children who don't eat their greens, but it can go mushy when boiled for too long, so keep an eye on it.



CAULIFLOWER (CHEESE)

A traditional part of the roast that isn't seen as much these days. Cauliflower on its own is fine, but cauliflower smothered in a good cheese sauce that's blistered from the heat is even finer. Just transfer your freshly boiled florets into an ovenproof dish, cover with a bechamel sauce with lots of Cheddar and bake for 15 minutes.

CARROTS

Delicious roasted with orange zest, but if you're planning on roast spuds and roast parsnips, they make a nice change when boiled too. Add a bit of orange juice to the water while they're boiling, then finish them off by frying them in butter until they colour nicely.

PARSNIPS

They're one of my favourite vegetables, which is why I see them as an indispensable part of the roast, but others avoid them like the plague. I can't see why – they're unbeatable when roasted with a tiny drizzle of honey and plenty of pepper. Don't cut them too thinly though, as the ends have a habit of burning up and turning bitter.

CONDIMENTS

THE TRADITIONAL ACCOMPANIMENTS TO DIFFERENT ROAST MEATS



BEEF

MUSTARD

HORSERADISH



CHICKEN

CRANBERRY SAUCE

BREAD SAUCE



PORK

BRAMLEY APPLE SAUCE

MUSTARD



LAMB

MINT SAUCE

REDCURRANT



GRAVY

AH, GRAVY - THAT DELICIOUS LIQUID WHICH CAN EITHER BRING ALL THE PARTS OF A SUNDAY ROAST TOGETHER IN PERFECT HARMONY, OR HAVE COOKS CURSING AND REACHING FOR THE GRANULES WHEN THEIR HOMEMADE ATTEMPT IS A LUMPY, SALTY MESS. HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO AVOID ANY GRAVY-MAKING CATASTROPHES

- To stop the meat burning and for a better flavour, sit the joint on top of roughly chopped onion, carrot and celery. Once you've made the gravy in the same pan, strain the liquid through a sieve, crushing the veg with a spoon to get all the liquid out

“We've all ended up with an inedible lumpy soup at some point, but when it all works out the results are worth the gamble.”

- Add a dash of soy sauce (or gravy browning) if your gravy looks a bit anaemic

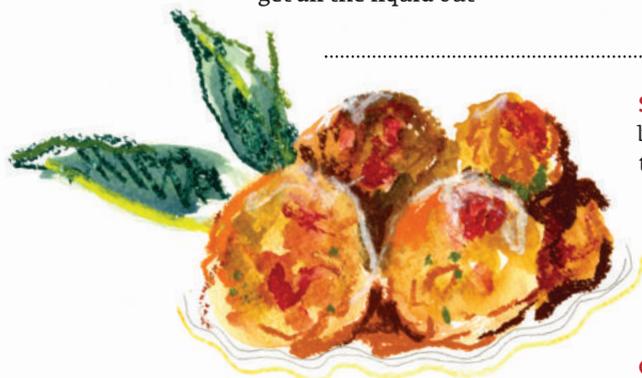
- When you deglaze your roasting pan with stock or wine, really scrape the bottom with a wooden spoon to loosen up the crispy bits

- A fat separator is an invaluable tool, but popping a few ice cubes into the liquid will help to collect some of the fat. Just remember



to take them out before they melt completely!

- Mix your flour in a cup of cold water before adding it to the hot juices to prevent any unwanted lumps



STUFFING

WHILE THERE'S A CERTAIN WARMING NOSTALGIA ABOUT LUMPY, CHEWY BALLS OF STUFFING FROM SCHOOL DINNERS, A GOOD ONE CAN BRING HEAPS OF FLAVOUR TO A SUNDAY ROAST.

However, it's much better to cook the stuffing separately to the meat; it's less complicated and tastes just as good. My preferred method is to fry off the ingredients, bind them with an egg, shape them into a log and wrap tightly with foil, to bake through for about 30 minutes later. Remove the foil for the last 15 minutes to let it get all crispy, then serve in thick slices.

SAGE & ONION works beautifully with roast pork and is the most common flavour of stuffing. Just combine chopped onion and sage with breadcrumbs braised in a little vegetable stock, season liberally and add a few knobs of butter.

CHESTNUT & FRUIT might be a bit festive for a midsummer roast, but the flavours match chicken very well. Chop celery, onion, apple, raisins, thyme and peeled chestnuts, combine with breadcrumbs, butter and a little apple juice, then bind with the egg.

APRICOT with lamb gives it a Moroccan feel, but anything sweet would work well with this fatty meat. Combine breadcrumbs with rosemary, dried apricots, onion, lemon zest and a little cumin.

WILD MUSHROOM takes a piece of roast beef to the next level – think wellington or stroganoff. Just fry any kind of wild mushroom and chopped shallots in lots and lots of butter until all the brown liquid has evaporated, then add a little crème fraiche. Garlic, thyme and pancetta are also welcome.

YORKSHIRE PUDDINGS

WHILE THEY LOOK A LITTLE OUT OF PLACE WITH LAMB, PORK AND CHICKEN, YORKIES HAVE TO GET A MENTION AS THEY'RE THE MOST ICONIC ELEMENT OF A ROAST DINNER.

Besides, I (and most people I know) can admit to serving them with all sorts of roast meat. They usually make the journey from a certain famous aunt's factory to our freezer and oven, but if you haven't tried making your own you really should. It's easy and tastes far better than the chewy, ready made version. Just get a muffin tray and add a little sunflower oil (or beef dripping, if you have it to hand) into each hole. Get your oven as hot as it will go and pop the tray in there – it's best to do this when you're crisping up the potatoes. For the batter beat together four eggs, 140g flour and 200ml milk, season and pour it evenly into the muffin tray holes. They'll be puffed up and brown in around 25 minutes.