

How we eat now

My guide to fuss-free festive baking



Emma Freud experiments with recipes using just two ingredients to take some of the stress out of Christmas

@emmalfreud

The world is getting more complicated, and life is definitely becoming more confusing. Christmas used to mean a wrapped gift and a satsuma; it now involves an itemised budget, a three-month planner and a spreadsheet. But for the next three minutes, recipes are going to get simpler. An astonishing number of culinary miracles can be conjured up with just TWO key ingredients (not including salt, pepper, baking powder and water, which don't count. Them's the rules.) These amazing creations might not overcome the need for a festive season Powerpoint presentation, but will hopefully distract from Santa's increasingly complex demands.

BANANAS

Bananas are a miracle food. They somehow contain enough sweetness and substance to replace the butter, sugar, flour or cream in a recipe. Mash one and mix it with two eggs (plus a sprinkle of baking powder), then griddle a spoonful at a time to make light and delicious pancakes. I'm not even joking.

The unlikely combination of two ripe bananas with a cup of ground oats and a pinch of salt makes a pretty decent biscuit, best eaten warm (the biscuits are even nicer if you add sultanas, but that would be three ingredients, so they have no place here).

But the banana's greatest hour is the two-ingredient banana ice cream. It's an alchemic phenomenon that you won't really believe works until you do it, at which point you'll ring me and scream down the phone in disbelief. Peel and chop a couple of bananas into about six chunks, freeze them, then blitz in a food processor with a sprinkle of sea salt and a splash of vanilla essence for a few minutes until it suddenly becomes perfect, creamy ice cream. Replace the vanilla with Nutella for a chocolate version, or with peanut butter for a total treat.

NUTELLA BROWNIES

Nigella's miracle – they're unexpected, but foolproof. Whisk four eggs for about 10 minutes using a hand blender until it's mousse-like and your arm is sore, then trickle in a pot of warm Nutella and bake for 20 mins. The result is a light and gentle brownie, but you can eat lots without feeling stuffed.

BREAD / PIZZA

Pizza dough made solely from equal quantities of self-raising flour and – wait for it – natural yogurt is a revelation. Just knead it for a few minutes with a tablespoon of sea salt, knock it into a circle and cover with your favourite toppings. The recipe for flatbreads is virtually the same – only it also includes a tablespoon of baking powder. Mix, knead, roll into thin taco-sized circles and dry-fry for a minute on each side.

CHOCOLATE MOUSSE TWO WAYS

Melt a bar of milk chocolate, cool slightly, then mix with two egg yolks and fold in two stiffly whipped egg whites before chilling. It's perfect. For a vegan version, put a bowl containing a bar of melted vegan dark chocolate over a bowl of ice. Add a cup of almond or coconut milk, and whisk for five minutes until thick. Chill, then serve with a nice, smug look on your face.

CRISPS

Not only easy, but almost carb-free and practically saintly. Whisk two egg whites with a fork until gently frothy, and season. Put a teaspoon of the frothy liquid into the bottom of a well-oiled muffin tin and sprinkle some grated cheddar on top. Bake for 15 minutes at 200C/180C fan/gas 6, eat instantly and praise the lord. Egg crisps: believe me.

INSTANT ICE CREAM/SORBET

A jar of soft caramel mixed with a pint of whipped double cream takes about four hours in the freezer to become phenomenal, no machine or churning needed. Or try whizzing frozen peach slices with a cup of full-fat coconut milk in a blender for quick, healthy ice cream. Blitz frozen raspberries in a blender with a handful of ice and a tablespoon of icing sugar to make a great instantaneous sorbet, or freeze pineapple chunks and blend with fresh mint for a luscious granita.

If frozen yogurt is your jam, beat Greek yogurt with agave syrup (and a teaspoon of sea salt) for a few mins, put in a plastic container and freeze for an hour – that's actually, honestly, really, truly all there is to it.

AND MY FAVOURITE – ICE CREAM SCONES

As part of my extensive research, I tried out a two-ingredient ice cream bread, consisting of just melted ice cream and flour. It was disgusting, but there was a brilliance in the audacity of it. My long-suffering son Charlie and I set to work adapting the bread recipe to create a scone version.

One full weekend of disasters later, we had nailed it: crisp on the outside, fluffy and light on the inside, not too sweet, a hint of ice-creamy goodness, with a little sea salt to bring out all the flavours. It's perfect, and takes literally a minute to prep as it has literally two ingredients (not forgetting my decree about baking powder and salt). This is a game-changer. Read on...

4 Good Food contributing editor Emma Freud is a journalist and broadcaster, director of Red Nose Day and a co-presenter of Radio Four's *Loose Ends*.

EMMA'S TWO-INGREDIENT ICE CREAM SCONES

I would like this recipe engraved on my tombstone, since it's the finest thing I have bequeathed to the planet in my 55 years here. As long as you leave the ice cream to melt in advance, it takes just a couple of minutes to go from an empty kitchen to scones in the oven. I've provided two methods – one quick, and one quick but also works if you've mislaid your scales. Serve the scones with a seasonal jam – and cream, of course.

The quick method

SERVES 2 PREP 2 mins COOK 20 mins EASY V

1 pint vanilla or strawberry ice cream, melted
175g self-raising flour, plus 2 tsp baking powder

- 1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Mix all the ingredients with a pinch of sea salt (if you're feeling adventurous, you can add a handful of sultanas), then pour the batter into a buttered muffin tin so that each hole is three-quarters full. Bake for 20 mins.
- 2 Cool on a wire rack. While still warm, split in two and add jam and whipped cream (in that order).

PER SCONE 86 kcal • fat 4g • saturates 2g • carbs 11g • sugars 4g • fibre none • protein 2g • salt 0.3g

The very quick 'I can't find my scales' method

SERVES Your friends PREP 4 mins COOK 20 mins EASY V

some vanilla or strawberry ice cream
some self-raising flour, plus 2 tsp baking powder

- 1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Heat however much ice cream you have in your freezer in a pan over a low heat until runny – don't let it get hot. Remove from the heat and add flour until it starts to resemble porridge – it should be pourable but not stiff. Stir in 2 tsp baking powder and a pinch of sea salt (plus sultanas if you're feeling reckless). Pour the mixture into a muffin tin so each hole is three-quarters full. Bake for 20 mins until golden.
- 2 Take the tins out of the oven and cool on a rack. While still warm, split and spread with jam and cream. Wolf.



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