

A close-up photograph of various autumn fruits including apples, pears, and plums on a wooden surface. The fruits are arranged in a cluster, with some in sharp focus and others blurred in the background. The lighting is warm, highlighting the textures and colors of the produce.

# An Honest Kitchen

Autumn 2010

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**N.B. The V symbol indicates that a meal is either vegetarian or has a delicious, easy vegetarian adaptation in the box below the recipe.**



# Dessert



# Ricotta, Ginger & Berry Puddings

Serves 2 people

½ cup blackberries or raspberries, washed

½ cup ricotta (*see glossary*)

¼ teaspoon grated fresh ginger

1½ tablespoons caster sugar

**Preheat the grill** to its highest setting.

**Make the pudding:** Divide the berries between two small dishes or ramekins. In a separate bowl mix together the ricotta and grated ginger, being careful not to over-whip the ricotta as you want it to be quite solid. Divide ricotta between the two ramekins and spread over the berries. Don't overfill - there should be a small gap between the top of the dish and the ricotta.

**Grill the puddings:** Sprinkle the sugar over the top of the puddings and place them straight under the grill, as close to the heat as possible. Cook for 4 - 6 minutes, until the sugar has caramelised and browned. Leave for 1 minute, before you tuck in, to allow the sugar to cool and crisp.

## Cooking & Storage:

Unless you have a chef's blowtorch, you won't get exactly the same crispness of topping that you get in a restaurant cr me brulee. Cooked under the grill, the sugar becomes slightly more chewy and toffee-like, but it's still a lovely dessert and only takes minutes to make. In order to get this effect, the sugar has to be heated *quickly*, so make sure your grill is as hot as possible and the ramekin is as close to the heat as you can get it.

While I rarely use caster sugar, in this instance it does produce the best topping. You also need a certain thickness of sugar, for it to caramelize properly, so do use the amount I've specified.

## Variations:

You could make these with many different fruits. Plums, some stewed apple or pear, even tinned fruit, would all work well.

## Lucy's Notes:

If you don't have ramekins, fear not—I used small teacups for the photos and they worked a treat.



# Pudding

By Kathryn

Many people seem to think a healthy diet is all about denial. Avoiding coffee and cake; never touching chocolate; and certainly not letting a hot, salted chip pass your mouth. But that's rubbish. In my opinion, you can eat all of those foods and still be healthy. Rather than banning foods, it's much more important to consider how often and how much of them you eat.

In each issue of *An Honest Kitchen* we've included a couple of desserts. There are two in Autumn - the really quite luxurious *Spiced Orange Rice Pudding* and some delicious *Ricotta, Ginger and Berry* pots. Both are simple to make and both use full fat ingredients, as well as some sweetener.

I wouldn't make dessert every day, but I do enjoy them, so most weekends I either buy some indulgent ice-cream, or spend a bit of time in the kitchen. Over the course of putting together this issue I've made the Rice Pudding on numerous occasions. Partly because it took a while to get the recipe right, but also partly because it's my kind of comfort food. A flash back to my childhood, in the UK, when mum used to make puddings on a regular basis.

However, knowing I'm going to make a pudding means I'll cook a smaller, lighter dinner. For example, I'll probably cut out the grain and instead centre the meal on vegetables, with a smaller amount of meat, fish, eggs, or legumes. Something like the *Beetroot Frittata*, *Indian Spiced Beef with Mushrooms* or *Fish in Yoghurt Sauce* would be ideal. I'll then have room for a portion of dessert, without finishing my meal feeling stuffed, uncomfortable and like I need a nap.

It's a sensible approach to dessert.

Moreover, while I do make some changes to dessert recipes, to reduce overall kilojoules and fat, I also believe if you're going to have pudding you probably shouldn't compromise too much on the quality. Many "diet" puddings are a great disappointment and to be honest I'd rather have a smaller portion of something wonderful and rich, than a slab of tasteless, plastic cake. That's just not worth the kilojoules.



Which is why I use full-fat ingredients in both of the Autumn desserts. I've tried making them with skim and low-fat ingredients, but it's just not the same. Instead I'd prefer to have a smaller portion and luxuriate in every mouthful, rather than trying to compromise and make something that's disappointing.

Treats, dessert and the foods *you* love are all part of a healthy diet. Rather than feeling guilty every time you eat something you consider to be "naughty" instead think about your food a bit more. If you're making a dessert, then have a lighter dinner – you'll actually enjoy the pudding more if you're not cramming it into an already bloated belly. Leave the leftovers for the next day, or make a smaller portion. Many recipes, including both the puddings in this edition, can be scaled down, to make smaller quantities easily.

Enjoy desserts and savour every mouthful - just not every day.