

## FOOD &amp; DRINK

## RECIPE

## COMFORT PIE



THE rich flavours of this pie belie the simplicity of ingredients. Sure you can tart it up with some tarragon, but I adore the straightforward nursery school flavours.

1 chicken  
 Glug sunflower oil  
 8 rashers unsmoked back bacon, diced  
 3 leeks  
 30g butter  
 30g plain flour  
 500ml milk  
 Salt & pepper  
 640g (2 packets) of ready-rolled puff pastry  
 1 egg, beaten

Joint the chicken, de-bone and skin it then chop it into chunks. Drizzle a glug of sunflower oil in a large frying pan and brown the chicken over a high heat.

Once browned, add the bacon and fry for 2-3 minutes whilst you chop the leeks. Now turn the heat down, add the chopped leeks and sweat for 5 minutes until soft.

In a large saucepan, melt the butter and, when it starts fizzing, add the flour. Allow to bubble for a minute or so before pouring in the milk little by little, stirring all the time, to create a thick sauce. Season well, bring to the boil then remove from the heat.

Tip the chicken mixture into the sauce, stir well and check the seasoning. Filling done.

Lay one sheet of pastry on a baking tray. Pile the filling on top leaving an inch gap at the edges. Brush the edges with the beaten egg then lay the second sheet of pastry on top, pressing the seams together with a fork. Egg wash the whole lot, poke a little hole in the top and bake at 200°C for 35-40 minutes or until the pastry is cooked through and golden brown.



Kathy Slack hard at work in her Oxfordshire kitchen on recipes to feature in her new cookbook which deals with gluts of allotment produce

# Making a virtue out of gluttony

**KATHY SLACK** on how to make the most of those gluts of home-grown produce

I can only grow gluts. In my veg patch things either fail completely or we are gorging ourselves on a mountain of crops that arrive all at once. I always plant too much. I am hopeless at staggering sowings.

Three years ago, stuck in traffic during a long drive home to West Oxfordshire from a holiday in Skye, I came up with an idea for making a virtue of my glut-growing habit. I would start a blog. A blog about the gluts; how I grow them and what I do with them in the kitchen. So one week I'd talk about my beetroot glut and suggest a few recipes for how to use them up. I started as soon as I got home and called the blog Gluts & Gluttony – the gluts from the allotment and the ensuing gluttony in the kitchen. I'd just rather rashly left a career in advertising in London and was enjoying country life but in need of a job. I hoped that maybe G&G would be the start of something.

At first it was all about the blog – taking pictures, testing recipes and so on. My patch is on a friend's farm in the heart of rural Oxfordshire so it lends beautifully to a lifestyle blog. Then I started cooking for local people in their homes for dinner parties and small celebrations. I'd write bespoke menus based on what was in season, what local Oxfordshire producers could offer and what I had in the veg patch. Then I was asked to give cookery classes in client's home. Soon, Gluts & Gluttony became a thriving small business offering private chef services, cookery



Kathy Slack's new G&G cookbook

classes and supper clubs. I took on a business partner, Mandy Bisson, in 2014 and we've never looked back.

This year, the G&G blog has become a book. I'm a cookbook junky and I've got a fair few gardening books too, but I'd never seen a book that talked about the growing of the produce and the cooking of it. Books are either mainly growing with a mention of what to cook or visa versa. I wanted to create a book that put

both on an equal footing. The *G&G Cookbook and Growing Guide* is the result – a book about growing your own food and what to cook with it.

The book is divided into four seasons with each season having three gluts and each glut having three recipes. So for example, having read how to grow your own winter squash you can make Squash and Sage Cake with Thyme and Feta Frosting, squash risotto or squash and feta salad.

Every recipe makes a hero of the fruit or vegetable in question. These are recipes for celebrating the glut, and for using it up of course, so the glutting vegetable is the main flavour of the dishes. They aren't intentionally vegetarian, but many recipes happen to be so and I suppose that's inevitable when you're celebrating a particular crop.

The recipes are simple too, but beautiful. At G&G we can't abide tipples and foams and frillery. It smothers the ingredients. And when you've grown your own ingredients you want to give them space to sing and put them centre stage.

The ingredients are intentionally easy to grow too. I'm lucky to have a decent-sized growing space, but I don't believe you need a veg patch to grow your own. So in the book I focus on fruit and veg that are simple to grow at home, often in pots and without much, if any, experience. I'd love people to grow more of their own food, so I wanted to make both the growing and the cooking accessible. \* *G&G cookbook* at [glutsandgluttony.com](http://glutsandgluttony.com)