

# Behind the scenes at Rivington Grill

A firm favourite at Taste of Dubai 2010, Rivington Grill's stand was constantly buzzing with people looking for their classic British fix. Still craving the restaurant's light and crispy beer-battered fish and chips, *Lauren Hills* visits the kitchen to learn the chefs' secrets

## Fish and chips 🍷

• SERVES 10

### Fish

1.8kg fresh Scottish haddock, (filleted, skin on, but scaled), cut into 180g portions  
100g self raising flour  
500ml beer/ale

### Mushy peas

400g peas, frozen  
50g shallots, chopped  
50g garlic, chopped  
200ml vegetable stock  
20g mint, washed, picked and chopped

### Tartar sauce

250g Mayonnaise  
50g Capers-rinsed, chopped  
50g Gherkins-rinsed, chopped  
20g Parsley-washed, picked and chopped

10 portions hand-cut chips  
5 lemons, cut in half

**1** Beer batter; whisk together the beer and flour until it forms a smooth paste

**2** Mushy peas; sauté the garlic and shallots, add peas and vegetable stock, bring to the boil, blend half of the peas and the other half crush, mix together and finish with the chopped mint.

**3** Tartare sauce; mix the mayonnaise, capers, gherkins and parsley together and season to taste.

**4** Heat the frying oil to 190degrees Celsius, dust the haddock portions in flour, and dip in the batter, making sure the fish is completely covered, and cook for approximately 7mins (or until cooked), drain well and season. Present the fish and chips and mushy peas as photographed below.



“The key to great fish and chips is to use the best quality fish you can find; this will mean you will have to do some hunting around but it is possible”

## CHEF'S BITES RIVINGTON GRILL

I stepped into the Rivington Grill kitchen in Souk Al Bahar on a sleepy Saturday morning. When most were just awakening from their weekend lie-ins, the chefs at Rivington Grill were busy preparing for the Saturday lunch session that lay ahead, which, they tell me, is one of the busiest times for the restaurant as friends and families swarm in to enjoy their 'Sunday' roasts and homely comfort food in a relaxed setting.

"What works with Rivington Grill is that it is not about one thing alone, but about having the right elements all working together. A great designed restaurant, superb location, passionate and knowledgeable serving team, clean and uncomplicated menu that you just can't choose which great favourite you will have, and using the best quality seasonal and freshest products available, it's as easy as that," says Chris Lester, corporate chef at Caprice, the holding company of Rivington Grill.

With the open-plan kitchen, wooden tables and light and airy feel; the restaurant has a very inviting ambience. And while the dramatic fountain show and Burj Khalifa can be viewed from the Rivington balcony, the chefs say that many customers request to sit inside to watch the live cooking unfold in front of them. And guests aren't afraid to ask questions and request cooking advice.

"The raised, open-plan kitchen definitely took a bit of getting used to, as you felt like you were on stage. But, I really enjoy the interaction with our guests and it is great to see familiar faces returning for their favourite meals. We do have guests coming up to ask questions about ingredients and to have a look at how we make some of the dishes; we really enjoy that," says Duncan Cruickshanks, head chef at Rivington Grill.

Rivington Grill presented the kitsch-and-cool prawn cocktail, the ever-popular fish and chips as well as the buttery and indulgent sticky toffee pudding at Taste of Dubai this year, which Cruickshanks says are three of the most popular dishes on the menu, and great examples of classic British cuisine.

While the prawn cocktail has often been denounced as a starter from the 80s and 90s, it is a refreshing and delicious dish that has great popularity in the region: "The prawn cocktail is a classic, retro starter packed with juicy prawns and will never go out of fashion," says Cruickshanks.

"It's one of those dishes that you might have grown up with, a dish that not many menus hold. We keep it simple, just as the dish is intended to be," continues Lester.

The fish and chips, with mushy peas and thick-cut chips, is an obvious winner among Dubai expats, and Cruickshanks goes to great lengths to source top-quality fish, and beautifully-fresh ingredients. Cruickshanks tells me that when preparing for dinner sessions, he places his order for freshly-caught Scottish haddock at 9.00 in the morning, and by 15.00 his order has arrived at the restaurant ready for that night's servings. Grilled to perfection in a light beer-batter sauce, it is the fresh fish that you taste, rather than just the batter.

"The key to great fish and chips is to use the best quality fish you can find; this will mean you will have to do some hunting around but it is possible. Your best bet is Waitrose or Lulu's. At Rivington we use diamond-cut, skin-on, haddock fillet, that has been filleted,



Duncan Cruickshanks, head chef at Rivington Grill

pin boned (where the small pin bones are removed), the belly has been removed leaving you a good thick haddock fillet. Don't rush it; follow the recipe, it will come out great in the end," says Lester.

Rivington's pastry chef Liz Stevenson showed me how to create her beautiful sticky toffee pudding, and it was interesting to see that the sponge is made from brown sugar, date muffins. Soaked in a lovely, buttery, toffee sauce Stevenson's recipe is an indulgent feast for the senses, and a homely dessert.

When asked how to ensure a delicious sticky toffee pudding, Lester says that "Liz Stevenson, our pastry chef is my best tip, she is priceless and has spent a great deal of time fine tuning the recipe so it is as good as you will find anywhere. Follow the recipe and be patient."

Now that you have the tips from the chefs at Rivington Grill, make sure you try these delicious recipes at home. Or hop down to Rivington Grill to watch the chefs prepare the dishes just as you like them.

## CHEF'S BITES RIVINGTON GRILL

### Classic prawn cocktail

• SERVES 10

800g prawns, fresh, cooked and peeled  
500g tiger prawn, fresh, cooked and peeled  
500g iceberg lettuce, washed and thinly shredded  
350g lemons, washed cut into wedges  
200g Cucumber, washed thinly sliced  
200g spring onions, washed thinly sliced  
150ml mayonnaise  
50g tomato ketchup  
5ml Worcestershire sauce  
1ml Tabasco sauce  
5g salt  
1 lemon, squeezed  
2g Cayenne pepper  
5 slices brown bread and butter

- 1 Mixed together the shredded iceberg, spring onions, and cucumber.
- 2 Mix together the mayonnaise, tomato ketchup, Worcestershire sauce, Tabasco, salt, to a smooth sauce.
- 3 Lay prawns in the bottom of the glass with a layer of cocktail sauce.
- 4 Add a layer of seasoned iceberg mix.
- 5 Repeat the process 3 time's with a spoon of cocktail sauce sprinkled with cayenne on the top.
- 6 Finish the top with a tiger prawn.
- 7 Serve with homemade brown bread and butter and a wedge of lemon.



*"Sticky toffee pudding is the stand-alone favourite at Rivington. In this simplified version, the sponge batter is cooked in one cake pan and soaked while warm with hot toffee sauce. Serve with good quality vanilla ice cream – Waitrose makes an outstanding organic vanilla. If seedless dates are unavailable, simply buy regular ones and remove the pits – but be sure not to factor the pits into the weight of the dates. Finished sticky toffee can keep for up to one week in the chiller," says Rivington Grill pastry chef, Liz Stevenson*



### Sticky Toffee Pudding

• SERVES 5-10, depending on how greedy you are!

#### FOR THE STICKY TOFFEE SPONGE

70g unsalted butter (softened, room temperature)  
220g soft brown sugar  
2 large fresh eggs  
125g seedless dates  
125ml water  
260g cake flour  
5g baking powder  
2g bicarbonate of soda

#### FOR THE TOFFEE SAUCE

225g granulated sugar  
80g glucose  
80g water  
500ml cooking cream

- 1 Make the toffee sauce; place the sugar, water and glucose together in a deep saucepan. Slowly bring to the boil, washing down the sides of the pan with a wet brush. Simmer on medium-high heat until mixture turns a light amber colour. Turn off the heat. If using electric, remove from the element.
- 2 Carefully and quickly, whisk the sugar vigorously. While whisking, slowly add the cream in small increments. Be very careful, as it will boil up the sides of the pan. Once all of the cream has been added, place back onto low heat and simmer until slightly thickened – about 5 minutes. If lumps have developed while whisking in the cream, don't worry, as they will melt once the pan has been put back on to simmer. Put the sauce aside to use once the sponge has been cooked.
- 3 Excess sauce should be used to pour over the soaked sponge before eating. If you will not be using the sauce straight away, cool at room temperature before placing in the chiller. The sauce will keep for up to one week.