

# A treat for two

Mary Cadogan's glamorous menu is enjoyable to make in easy stages for a truly relaxing Valentine evening  
PHOTOGRAPHS LIS PARSONS

Whether you have been together for two months or 20 years, Valentine's Day is a wonderful excuse to put aside all the chores and enjoy a romantic evening together, sharing good food and wine. And as it's on a Saturday this year, you'll have a bit more time to get the candles out, put on your glad rags and really set the scene for a special evening.

## Smoked salmon with prawns, horseradish cream & lime vinaigrette

SERVES 2 • PREP 20 mins

● NO COOK **Easy** 

This stunning starter can be assembled ahead, then topped with dressed leaves just before serving.

1 tbsp crème fraîche  
1 tsp horseradish sauce  
4 slices smoked salmon  
10 large cooked prawns, peeled but tails left on

### FOR THE SALAD

juice 1 lime, finely grated zest of ½  
1 tsp clear honey  
½ tsp finely grated fresh root ginger  
2 tbsp light olive oil  
2 handfuls small leaf salad

Mix the crème fraîche with the horseradish and a little salt and pepper. For the dressing, whisk the lime juice and zest with the honey, ginger and seasoning, then whisk in the oil. Lay the smoked salmon and prawns on 2 plates, then top with a dollop of the horseradish cream. Toss the salad in most of the dressing and pile on top. Drizzle the remaining dressing around the plate and serve.

**PER SERVING** 266 kcals, protein 25g, carbs 4g, fat 17g, sat fat 4g, fibre none, sugar 3g, salt 3.34g

### MENU TO SHARE

- Smoked salmon with prawns, horseradish cream & lime vinaigrette
- Steak with mushroom puff tartlets
- Oven sauté potatoes
- Balsamic spinach
- Tia Maria & chocolate creams

### KEEP YOUR EVENING REALLY STRESS-FREE

- The day before, make and bake the tartlets
- Make the dressing, peel the prawns and make the puds in the morning
- A few hours ahead, get the mushroom mix ready, wash the salad and boil the potatoes

“My husband, Mick, loves to cook but doesn't get to do it too often, so he took over the kitchen for the afternoon and made this menu for me. He had a great time cooking the dishes and we had a memorable evening”



Elegant no-cook starter

## Balsamic spinach

SERVES 2 ● PREP 5 mins

● COOK 2 mins **Easy** **V** **X** **✓** Good

source of folic acid and vitamin C, counts as 1 of 5-a-day, low fat  
Wash 250g young spinach leaves thoroughly, removing any tough stalks. Set the spinach leaves in a colander, then pour over boiling water from the kettle until all the leaves are wilted. Press out as much liquid as possible with the bottom of a saucer. Heat a drizzle olive oil in a pan, add the spinach and a splash balsamic vinegar, season well, then warm through.

**PER SERVING** 68 kcal, protein 4g, carbs 2g, fat 5g, sat fat 1g, fibre 3g, sugar 2g, salt 0.44g

## Oven sauté potatoes

SERVES 2 ● PREP 5 mins

● COOK 35 mins **Easy** **V** **X**

Good for you, low fat  
Heat oven to 200C/fan 180C/gas 6. Peel 500g potatoes, then cut into small chunks. Cook in boiling salted water for 3 mins, drain well, then leave to dry. Heat 1 tbsp olive oil in a roasting tin. Add the potatoes, salt, pepper and a few thyme sprigs. Roast for 30-40 mins, turning halfway through until crisp and golden.

**PER SERVING** 237 kcal, protein 5g, carbs 43g, fat 6g, sat fat 1g, fibre 3g, sugar 2g, salt 0.04g

## Steak with mushroom puff tartlets

SERVES 2 ● PREP 20 mins ● COOK 30-35 mins **Easy** **X** **V**

*These are sort of deconstructed Beef Wellingtons. All the elements of that classic dish are here – the puff pastry, the mushroom mixture and the steak – but the result is much lighter and crisper.*

100g/4oz puff pastry  
1 tbsp olive oil, plus a little extra  
1 shallot, finely chopped  
100g/4oz chestnut mushrooms, chopped  
1 tsp chopped thyme, plus sprigs to decorate  
3 tbsp port or Madeira  
1 tbsp double cream  
2 fillet steaks, about 140g/5oz each

**1** Heat oven to 200C/fan 180C/gas 6. Roll out the pastry to about the thickness of a AED 1 coin, then cut out 2 x 12cm circles using a cutter, or by scoring around a saucer. Score a circle 2cm in from the edge, then prick the pastry inside the border. Lift onto a baking tray, then bake for 20-25 mins or until golden and puffed. Press the risen middles down a little, ready for the filling. Can be made a day ahead, then reheated in a hot oven.

**2** Heat the oil in a pan, add the shallots, then fry until softened. Add the mushrooms and thyme, then fry until mushrooms are softened and any liquid almost gone. Add the port or Madeira, then bubble for 2 mins. Add the cream, simmer for 1 min more until the sauce is slightly thickened, then set aside.

**3** Rub the steaks with a little oil and seasoning. Heat a griddle pan until hot, then cook the steaks for 2-3 mins on each side (depending on their thickness) for medium rare, a little more if you like your steaks well done. Cover the steaks with foil, then rest them for 10 mins.

**4** Reheat the tartlets. Warm the mushroom mixture over a low heat. Set the tartlets on warm plates, then spoon over the mushroom mixture. Sit the fillet steaks on top with a sprig of thyme. Serve with Balsamic spinach and Oven sauté potatoes (see above right).

**PER SERVING** 565 kcal, protein 42g, carbs 22g, fat 34g, sat fat 12g, fibre 1g, sugar 4g, salt 0.61g



Hassle-free Beef Wellington

## Tia Maria & chocolate creams

SERVES 2 • PREP 20 mins plus chilling

• COOK 2 mins **Easy** ❄️🍷

*Just a few spoonfuls of this rich and creamy dessert are all you need to end the meal with a flourish without overdoing it. They can be made and chilled several hours ahead. If you don't have Tia Maria, use another liqueur such as Cointreau, Grand Marnier or Kahlúa.*

50g/2oz dark chocolate, 70% cocoa, broken into squares

150ml/¼pt double cream

2 tbsp Tia Maria

cocoa powder, for dusting

Cantuccini or amaretti biscuits, to serve

**1** Put the chocolate into a bowl. Mix the cream with the Tia Maria, reserve 2 tbsp, then tip the rest into a saucepan and bring just to the boil. Remove from the heat and tip straight over the chocolate, stirring until the chocolate melts. Divide between 2 small glasses and allow to cool slightly. Whip the remaining cream until slightly thickened, then spoon over the cooled chocolate mix. Chill for at least 1 hr to set. While you're waiting, cut a heart shape from a piece of thick card.

**2** When ready to serve, set the card over the glass and sift over a dusting of cocoa powder. Lift off carefully and do the same with the other glass.

**PER SERVING** 566 kcal, protein 3g, carbs 17g, fat 51g, sat fat 28g, fibre 2g, sugar 12g, salt 0.05g



Chocolately finale