

CHEF'S TABLE

Too busy to fix dinner? So's Mark McEwan a lot of the time but, judging by these recipes adapted from his new book, when he cooks, he cooks

BY Julia Aitken RECIPES BY Mark McEwan PHOTOGRAPHY BY Edward Pond FOOD STYLING BY Ashley Denton

OVER A HAM-AND-CHEESE-sandwich lunch at his desk, chef Mark McEwan concedes with a chuckle that the title of his first cookbook — *Great Food at Home* — could be seen as slightly ironic. The downtown condo he shares with his wife Roxanne is located above Toronto's five-star Hazelton Hotel that houses his restaurant One, and he admits that because of their busy schedule, they're fans of room service. Any cooking chef McEwan does occurs weekends at their cottage located north of the city on Georgian Bay.

Actually, these days "chef" doesn't come close to describing McEwan's job title. He heads up a veritable empire that includes three more restaurants, a catering company and an eponymously named retail store. Oh, and add TV to the mix with the launch this spring of *Top Chef Canada*, with McEwan as head judge, plus there's a second book — *Fabricca*, featuring rustic Italian recipes from his newest restaurant — coming out in the fall.

How does he do it all? McEwan credits his first boss, chef Joseph Vonlanthan with schooling him, some 35 years ago, in the art of managing: "He taught me how to organize myself and to always be ahead of the curve."

McEwan's greatest challenge now he oversees a \$50-million business and 500 employees, including some top-class chefs? "To try not to get too rusty in the kitchen." Good job he has his cottage then.



Fingerling Potato and Green Bean Salad with Seared Scallops

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

Potatoes, green beans and vinaigrette make for a classic combination that Mark McEwan takes one step further by including some perfectly seared scallops. For best flavour, serve the salad while the vegetables are still warm. A chilled glass of Pouilly-Fuissé goes well with this.

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- 1-1/2 lb (750 g) slim French green beans
- 1 lb (500 g) fingerling potatoes, scrubbed
- 1/3 cup (75 mL) plus 1 tsp (5 mL) olive oil
- 3 tbsp (45 mL) white wine vinegar
- 1/2 tsp (7 mL) finely minced fresh horseradish
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) Dijon mustard
- Pinch each kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Leaves from 1 large sprig Italian parsley, finely chopped
- 12 dry-packed sea scallops
- 1-1/2 tbsp (22 mL) unsalted butter
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Preheat the oven to 450°F (230°C). In a large saucepan of boiling water, blanch beans for 2 minutes. Immediately plunge into ice water. Drain beans well and spread out on a tea towel to dry.

Cook potatoes in boiling salted water for 15 to 20 minutes or until tender.

Meanwhile, whisk together 1/3 cup (75 mL) olive oil, vinegar, horseradish, mustard, salt and pepper in a small bowl. Whisk in half the parsley.

Drain potatoes and cut each in half lengthwise. In a large bowl, combine potatoes, beans and two-thirds of vinaigrette. Toss well and adjust seasonings to taste.

Pat scallops dry and salt them generously. Thoroughly heat a large ovenproof non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Add scallops and cook, without turning, for 2 to 3 minutes or until undersides are bronzed. Turn scallops over and remove skillet from heat. Add butter and remaining oil to skillet and transfer to oven. Cook for 6 to 7 minutes or until scallops are medium-rare and bronzed on both sides.

By now, potatoes will have absorbed much of the dressing, so add a little more to taste and toss salad again. Divide salad among six plates or arrange on a large platter. Top salad with scallops and sprinkle with remaining parsley.

Asian-Glazed Pork Belly

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

For years most people knew pork belly only in its role as bacon, but over the last decade it's taken centre stage in all its fatty, unsmoked glory. This version, which takes four days to prep but is well worth the wait, is seductively flavoursome. Serve with Israeli couscous and steamed rapini, and pour a spicy Zinfandel or rich Viognier.

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- ½ cup (125 mL) kosher salt
- ¼ cup (50 mL) granulated sugar
- ¼ cup (50 mL) crushed, unpeeled garlic cloves
- ¼ cup (50 mL) liquid honey
- One-quarter bunch thyme
- One-quarter bunch cilantro
- 1 inch (2.5 cm) fresh ginger, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) each coriander seeds and black peppercorns
- 1 stalk lemongrass, cut into 2-inch (5 cm) lengths and crushed
- 6 bay leaves
- 4 star anise, broken
- 2 kaffir lime leaves
- 3 lb (1.5 kg) piece boneless pork belly with skin
- 3 quarts (3 L) homemade chicken stock
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) vegetable oil
- 1 cup (250 mL) Asian Glaze (recipe follows)
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In a Dutch oven large enough to hold pork snugly, combine salt, sugar, garlic, honey, thyme, cilantro, ginger, coriander seeds, peppercorns, lemongrass, bay leaves, star anise and lime leaves with 5 cups (1.25 L) water. Bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve salt and sugar. Remove from the heat and let cool completely. When cool, put pork in brine, adding more water if necessary so pork is submerged. Cover and refrigerate for 3 days.

Preheat the oven to 325°F (160°C). Remove pork from brine (discarding brine) and rinse under cold running water. Rinse Dutch oven well. Pour 2 quarts (2 L) stock into Dutch oven and bring to a simmer. Add pork, cover pot tightly and transfer to oven. Cook for 2-1/2 to 3 hours until pork is very tender but not falling apart, topping up pot with additional hot stock if necessary so pork remains submerged.

Remove pork from braising liquid (discarding liquid) and place, skin side up, on rimmed baking sheet. Cover pork with a sheet of parchment paper, then with a second baking sheet. Add weight to upper baking sheet (bricks, cans of tomatoes or a small case of beer) and refrigerate overnight.

Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Remove skin from pork. Cut pork into 6 equal portions. Heat vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Add pork and sear on all sides until crisp and golden brown.

Transfer pork to a well-greased baking dish large enough to hold it in one layer. Warm Asian glaze, then brush pork very generously with glaze. Roast, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Turn pork pieces over and brush again generously with glaze. Roast for a further 10 minutes until glaze is tacky and pork is thoroughly heated through.

Asian Glaze

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS (500 ML)

Mark McEwan describes this glaze as "Asian ketchup" and says you can never have too much of it. He slathers copious amounts on the pork belly and also lets it work its magic on chicken and ribs.

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- 1 tbsp (15 mL) vegetable oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ½ tbsp (7 mL) grated fresh ginger
- 1 cup (250 mL) liquid honey
- ½ cup (125 mL) packed brown sugar
- ½ cup (125 mL) each soy sauce and sake
- ¼ cup (50 mL) orange juice
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) each coriander and fennel seeds, toasted
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) rice wine vinegar
- 2 star anise, toasted
- ½ tsp (2 mL) sambal oelek (Indonesian hot pepper sauce)
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In a wide, deep saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. Add garlic and ginger and cook, stirring, for 2 to 3 minutes (do not brown). Add remaining ingredients and bring to a boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Simmer, uncovered, for 20 to 30 minutes or until glaze has reduced a little and is slightly syrupy.



Lemon Curd Millefeuille

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

This delectable dessert features crisp pastry sandwiching a refreshingly tart filling.

LEMON CURD

- 6 egg yolks
- 1 whole egg
- ¾ cup (175 mL) strained fresh lemon juice (about 3 lemons)
- 1 can (300 mL) sweetened condensed milk

PASTRY

- 2 sheets (16 x 12 inches/40 x 30 cm) frozen phyllo pastry, thawed
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) icing sugar

RASPBERRY COULIS

- 2 cups (500 mL) raspberries
- ¼ cup (50 mL) granulated sugar

Candied lemon rind and fresh raspberries for garnish

For lemon curd, lightly beat egg yolks and whole egg together in a small bowl. Heat lemon juice to a bare simmer in a medium saucepan. Whisk 1 tbsp (15 mL) hot lemon juice into eggs, then whisk in another 1 tbsp (15 mL). Whisk egg mixture back into saucepan and cook over medium-low heat, whisking constantly, until mixture has thickened slightly and is smooth.

Rub lemon mixture through a fine sieve into a clean bowl. Refrigerate until chilled. Whisk in condensed milk and chill again.

Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Working quickly, lay 1 sheet phyllo on work surface. Cut six 12- x 2-1/2-inch (30 x 6 cm) strips from sheet, discarding trimmings. Repeat with second sheet, cutting just 3 strips and discarding trimmings.

Brush 3 strips of pastry with butter and sift with icing sugar. Stack strips one on top of the other. Repeat with remaining strips to make 3 three-ply stacks of pastry.

Cut each stack in half lengthwise, then cut these strips crosswise into 4-inch (10 cm) lengths to make 18 small rectangles of pastry.

Arrange rectangles on parchment-paper-lined baking sheet. Top with a second sheet of parchment and a second baking sheet. Bake for 6 to 8 minutes or until pastry is golden brown and crisp. Remove top baking sheet and parchment. Let pastry cool completely on baking sheet.

For raspberry coulis, heat raspberries and sugar in a small saucepan over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until sugar dissolves. Pulse in a food processor until smooth, then rub through a fine sieve.

To assemble, place one layer of pastry in centre of each of six plates. Pipe a layer of lemon curd over pastry. Top with another layer of pastry and pipe on more curd. Top with a third layer of pastry and a single dollop of curd. Scatter with candied lemon rind. Spoon a drizzle of raspberry coulis around each dessert and garnish with raspberries. (A)