



Bon vivants

Fine weather? Seize the day!
All you need for a chic picnic
is some Frenchy food and
the rug out of the boot.

RECIPES

Suzy Ashford

PHOTOGRAPHY

Chris Middleton



PICNIC, PIQUE-NIQUE – WHICHEVER way you say it, it remains the same: one of the loveliest possible ways to eat. Although chip and Marmite sandwiches will forever have a place in the hearts of antipodean picnickers (and you'll never catch us advocating against them), Sydney-based food writer, cook and Francophile Suzy Ashford had more sophisticated ideas, so she compiled them into a new cookbook, *Le Picnic: Chic Food for On-the-Go*.

Featuring dishes inspired by her frequent trips to France – from quiches, galettes and tartlets to baguettes and pâté – the delectable array of recipes is designed to impress and make your next outdoor meal an elegant affair to remember. For the less ambitious cook, others are as easy as pie. Plus there are some actual pies, which should make even the most confirmed Kiwis feel right at home while the rest of us wear stripes and throw around words like 'oui' as if we were born for it.

MINI DUCK CONFIT & CHERRY CROUSTADES

MAKES 12

For the duck

1 shallot, finely chopped
3 garlic cloves, crushed
3 thyme sprigs
3 tbsp sea salt flakes
Freshly ground black pepper
4 duck leg quarters
1 litre (4 cups) duck or goose fat

For the croustades

1 tbsp olive oil
1 large shallot, thinly sliced
¼ red cabbage, thinly shaved
1 fennel bulb, shaved
2 tsp apple cider vinegar
1 cup fresh or frozen cherries, pitted
12 filo pastry sheets
½ cup melted butter

Prepare the duck a day ahead. Combine the shallot, garlic, thyme, salt and pepper in a mixing bowl. Coat the duck pieces in the mixture, then place them in a zip-lock bag. Refrigerate for 24 hours.

Preheat the oven to 150°C (fan-forced). Rinse the salt mixture from the duck, then pat dry. Pack the pieces snugly in a single layer in a small high-sided baking dish.

Melt the duck fat in a small saucepan, then pour it over the duck pieces, ensuring they're completely submerged. Place the baking dish in the oven and cook for 2½ hours or until the meat is tender and comes easily off the bone. Remove from the oven and allow to cool, then remove the duck pieces from the fat, shred the meat and skin and discard the bones.

To make the croustades, heat the olive oil in a frying pan over a medium heat, then add the shallot and cook, stirring, for 4 minutes, or until softened. Add the cabbage and cook for 10 minutes or until it's tender and the liquid has reduced.

Add the fennel and cook for a further 4-5 minutes. Mix in the vinegar, cherries and duck meat and cook for a few minutes to warm through.

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan-forced). Brush the cups of a large 12-hole muffin tin with melted butter.

Lay a sheet of filo pastry on a work surface and brush with melted butter. Repeat with five more layers, one on top of the other, keeping the remaining pastry under a clean, dry tea towel so the sheets don't dry out. Cut the filo rectangle into six 12cm squares. Repeat with the remaining filo sheets, then line the muffin tin with the pastry.

Use tongs to partly fill the pastry cups with the duck mixture, allowing enough room to fold the pastry edges over and enclose the filling. Brush the tops with more melted butter to seal.

Bake for 15 minutes or until the pastry is golden. Serve warm, or leave to cool then refrigerate in an airtight container for transporting and serving at room temperature. ▷