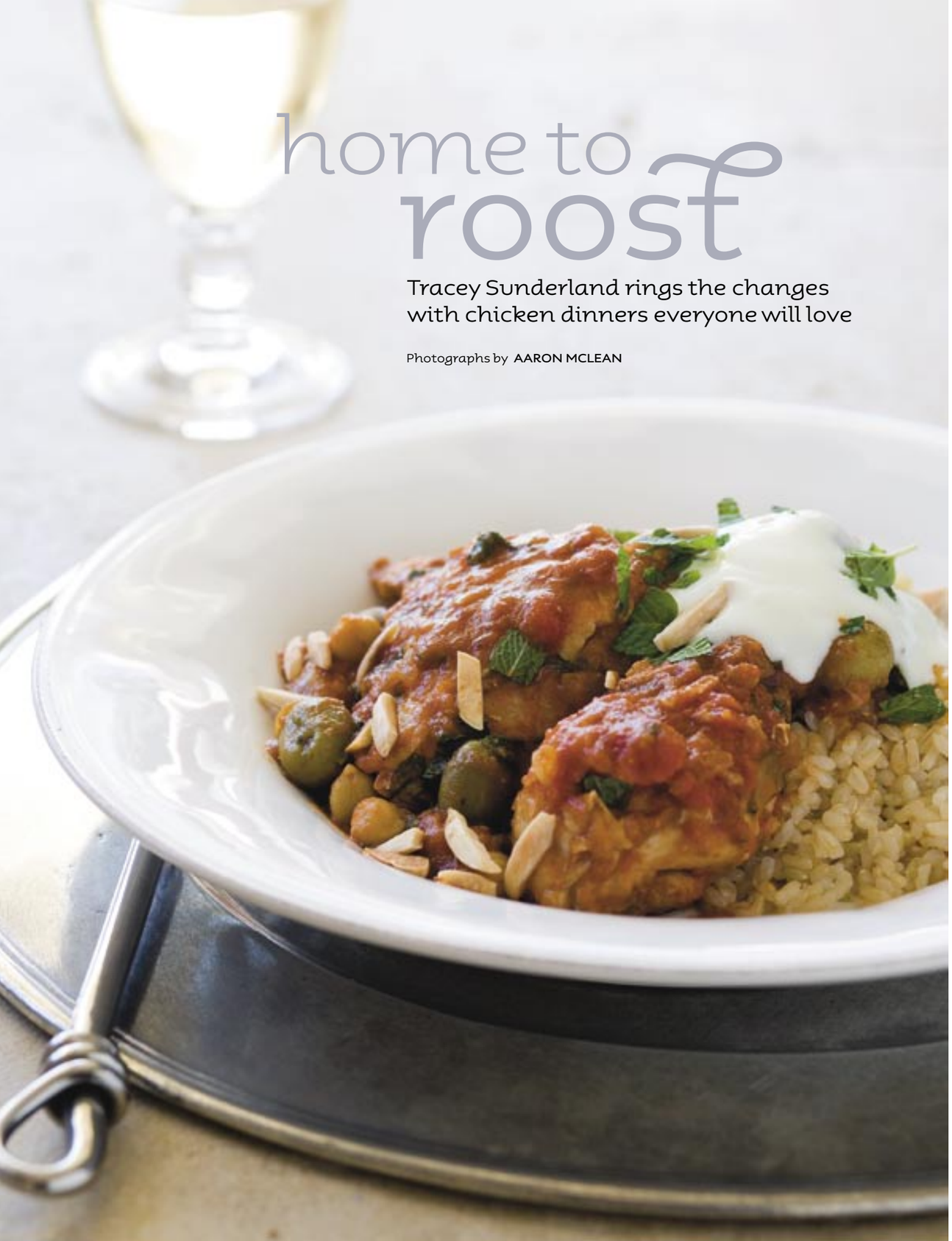
# home to roost

Tracey Sunderland rings the changes with chicken dinners everyone will love

Photographs by AARON MCLEAN



## Middle Eastern chicken

READY IN: 1 HOUR
SERVES: 6

- 8 chicken pieces, on the bone, skin on
- 1 Tbsp oil
- 1 Tbsp butter
- 1 onion, roughly chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 tsp cumin powder
- ½ tsp chilli powder
- 1 cinnamon quill
- ¼ tsp ground white pepper
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 can chopped tomatoes
- ½ cup water
- 300g can chickpeas, drained
- ½ cup green olives
- 2 Tbsp preserved lemon, skin only, finely sliced, or 2 tsp lemon zest (see Glossary, page 141)
- ¼ cup mint, chopped
- brown rice, to serve (see Glossary, page 141)
- ½ cup nib almonds, toasted
- natural yoghurt, to serve

**1** Place chicken pieces on a board and trim off any flaps of excess skin and pieces of white fat. Pat down each chicken piece with a kitchen towel until dry.

**2** Heat a large, heavy-based casserole or large, lidded saucepan. Add oil and butter and heat until foaming. Cook chicken in two batches until golden on all sides (about 6 minutes). Place on a plate and set aside.

**3** Return the pan to the heat and add the onion. Sauté until transparent then add garlic and sauté for a couple of minutes. Add cumin, chilli, cinnamon, pepper and salt and stir over the heat for a minute. Add the browned chicken pieces with their juices and stir through to coat in the spices.

**4** Pour the tomatoes into the casserole and swish the can out with the ½ cup of water, then add that too. Bring to the boil then turn down to a simmer, cover and cook for 25 minutes.

**5** Add chickpeas, olives and preserved lemon and stir through the chicken casserole. Continue to cook with lid off for a further 15 minutes. By this time the chicken should be very tender and almost falling off the bone. Skim off any dark, orange fat using a small ladle or deep serving spoon. Sprinkle with mint and stir through just before serving.

**6** Enjoy alongside steamed brown rice, cracked wheat or couscous and scatter toasted almonds on top. Serve with harissa (a readily available North African hot paste) if you'd like the sauce to be hotter, and a bowl of natural yoghurt as a cooler.

Parmesan & sage chicken fillets, see recipe over page.

### PREPARING AHEAD

This is ideal to prepare in advance and can be kept for a couple of days in the refrigerator. The flavour will actually improve over time. It is also ideal to freeze for as long as 2-3 months. Freeze the chicken in its sauce in small plastic containers or snaplock bags. Serve it with fresh couscous and a dolllop of yoghurt. Sprinkle with toasted cashews or almonds at the end.

## Parmesan & sage chicken fillets

READY IN: 30 MINUTES
SERVES: 4

- **100g parmesan, finely grated**
- **½ cup dried wholemeal breadcrumbs**
- **1 cup sage leaves, chopped, or try basil or oregano**
- **1 egg**
- **pinch salt**
- **1 cup milk**
- **600g chicken tenderloins**
- **½ cup seasoned flour (see Cook's note, right)**
- **spinach salad, to serve**
- **new potatoes, to serve**

**1** Mix together the parmesan and breadcrumbs. Add the sage. Set aside.

**2** In a medium-sized bowl, whisk the egg with a pinch of salt, then slowly add the milk and whisk until combined. Put aside.

**3** Place chicken fillets on a plate or board and pat down with a paper towel to remove any excess moisture. Trim away any sinew. Tip flour onto a dinner plate.

**4** To crumb the chicken fillets, line the bowls up in this order: flour, egg mix, parmesan crumbs. Dip a couple of fillets at a time into the flour and turn until well coated. Place into the egg mix then into the crumbs. Toss until the fillets are well coated. Place directly onto a greased oven tray, leaving room between each fillet. Repeat until finished.

**5** Spray the fillets lightly with cooking oil or drizzle over a little oil. Place tray in an oven preheated to 190°C. Bake for 12-15 minutes until the fillets are lightly golden or spring back when touched.

**6** Serve these crispy fillets straight from the oven with a spinach salad and new potatoes on the side.

### COOK'S NOTE

For seasoned flour, add ¼ tsp salt and ¼ tsp ground white pepper to ½ cup flour. Toss well to mix. Use to coat any meat before browning and adding to a casserole.

## Chicken loaf with a crust of semi-dried tomato

This crust makes a tasty, zingy topping and means you won't have to serve a chutney or sauce with the loaf. I have wrapped it in chicken bacon – it's delicious! Who said meat loaf was boring?

READY IN: 1 HOUR 20 MINUTES
SERVES: 6

- **1 Tbsp olive oil**
- **1 onion, finely diced**
- **2 cloves garlic, crushed**
- **1 Tbsp basil, chopped**
- **1 Tbsp fresh oregano or marjoram, chopped**
- **850g chicken mince**
- **½ tsp ground white pepper**
- **1 tsp salt**
- **2 eggs**
- **250g fresh breadcrumbs**
- **1 Tbsp butter, melted**
- **200g Tegel honey-flavoured chicken bacon (see Cook's note)**

Topping

- **½ cup semi-dried tomatoes, well-drained and finely sliced (see Glossary, page 141)**
- **½ red onion, finely sliced**
- **½ can chopped tomatoes**
- **1 tsp smoked paprika**

**1** Heat a frying pan and add oil. Add onion and sauté for a couple of minutes. Add garlic and herbs and sauté for a further minute. Remove from the heat and allow to cool.

**2** In a large bowl, place the chicken mince, pepper, salt, eggs, breadcrumbs and sautéed onion and herbs. Wearing kitchen gloves, use your hands to mix the ingredients until well combined.

**3** Grease a 12cm x 22cm loaf tin with the melted butter. Reserve the leftover butter.

**4** Line the tin with chicken bacon, which comes in short, wide pieces. It should take five pieces to line the base, placing them across the width of the base and slightly overlapping. Then press one piece of bacon into each end of the tin and two pieces (placed end on end and slightly overlapping) along each side of the tin. Spoon the loaf mixture into the tin, pressing firmly into the corners. Continue to fill the tin and press down until well packed. Brush the remaining butter over the top.

**5** To make the topping, place all the ingredients in a bowl and combine. It should be quite thick but sloppy. Spoon this wet mixture onto the meat loaf and cover evenly. Place loaf on an oven tray and cook in an oven preheated to 190°C for 60-70 minutes. The meat loaf will crack slightly when cooked. If unsure, remove it from the oven and plunge a small, sharp knife into the middle – if the juices run clear it is cooked; if not, return for a further 10 minutes. Smooth the topping back over to cover the cut. The crust will be a little caramelised once the loaf is ready.

**6** Allow loaf to cool for 5 minutes then turn out onto a dinner plate lined with plastic wrap (this will stop the crust sticking to the plate). Turn it right-side-up onto a chopping board or platter, remove plastic wrap and serve in slices with a light summer salad. It is also delicious served cold.

### COOK'S NOTE

Chicken bacon is a great alternative to regular bacon as it is 95 per cent fat free. It is made from chicken thigh meat and is cured and smoked like bacon. It cooks very quickly and has a good flavour. You can find it in the chiller section at the supermarket.

## Chicken, leek & mustard pie

READY IN: 1 HOUR 10 MINUTES
SERVES: 6

### Chicken filling

- 750g chicken thighs, skinless and boneless
- 4 Tbsp canola or soya oil
- 200g Tegel chicken bacon, sliced
- 1 leek, washed and dried and finely sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 Tbsp fresh marjoram, chopped

### Béchamel sauce

- 3 Tbsp butter
- ¼ cup flour
- ¼ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp ground white pepper
- 2½ cups milk
- 1½ cups tasty cheese, grated
- 2 Tbsp wholegrain mustard
- 4 Tbsp butter, melted
- 16 sheets filo pastry, 375g box
- 1 Tbsp milk
- 1-2 Tbsp sesame or poppy seeds

**1** Thickly slice chicken thighs. Cut slices in half so you have large chunks of meat.

**2** Heat a large frying pan or heavy-based saucepan with 2 Tbsp of the oil. Brown the chicken in two batches until lightly golden, then remove and place in a bowl. Add chicken bacon to the pan and sauté for 2-3 minutes until lightly golden. Add to the chicken and set aside to cool.

**3** Add remaining oil to the pan. Add leek, cover and sauté for a couple of minutes until softened. Remove lid and cook the leek until the juices have evaporated. Add garlic and marjoram and sauté for a minute. Add to the chicken, cover with a paper towel and set aside.

**4** Meanwhile prepare béchamel sauce: melt the butter in a saucepan, sprinkle in the flour and stir. Cook for 2 minutes over a gentle heat. Add salt and pepper and stir well. Continue stirring and add the milk slowly, ½ cup at a time. Stir until the sauce begins to thicken and is smooth. Simmer on a low heat for 2 minutes then stir in cheese and mustard. Stir well, simmer for 2 minutes then remove from heat. Spread across a shallow dish to assist cooling. The sauce must be cold before continuing.

Classic chicken lasagne, see recipe over page.

**5** Brush a 2cm-deep, 26-28cm square, rectangular or round pie dish with melted butter (see Cook's note). Brush one sheet of filo with butter and line the dish (butter side up). Repeat to make 8 layers. Keep pastry covered with a clean, damp tea towel while layering to stop it drying out.

**6** Take the bowl of cooled chicken, bacon and leek and tip into a sieve placed over a bowl. Drain away the excess cooking juices and discard. Combine with the cooled béchamel sauce in a large bowl and mix well with a fork. Spread evenly into the filo base. Butter and layer the remaining 8 pieces of filo pastry to make the lid. Brush pie edges with milk then press the pastry lid on and shape it to the edge of the pie tin, trimming off any excess pastry with kitchen scissors or a small, sharp knife. Brush with remaining butter and sprinkle with seeds. Bake at 200°C for 35-40 minutes.

### COOK'S NOTE

A baking tin will transfer the heat better than a ceramic dish and will result in a pie with a well-cooked base. If using a ceramic pie dish, extend the cooking time by a little.

All chicken (excluding bacon) provided by Meat Cuisine (www.meatcuisine.co.nz). Limestone background used throughout from Artedomus. Page 68: White bowl from Corso De' Fiori. Knotted fork and pewter plate from French Country Collections. Wineglass from Living and Giving. Page 69: Entrée plate from Corso De' Fiori. Tumbler and placemat from The Homestore. Grey bowl from Eon. Knife and fork from Living and Giving. Page 71: Stainless steel tray from Milly's. Condiment bowl from Eon. Knife, privately owned. Page 72: Pie dish and linen oven cloth from Milly's. Sauce bowl from Eon. Page 73: Baking dish from Living and Giving. Oval pewter plate from French Country Collections. Dinner plates from Eon. Fork, privately owned. Page 75: Grey dinner plate from Eon. Fork from The Homestore. See Where to Buy, page 142.

## Classic chicken lasagne

READY IN: 1 HOUR
SERVES: 6

### Chicken bolognaise sauce

- **3 Tbsp canola or soya oil**
- **500g chicken mince**
- **1 large onion, finely diced**
- **2 cloves garlic, crushed**
- **1 Tbsp chopped basil**
- **1 Tbsp chopped oregano**
- **2 cans chopped tomatoes**
- **½ cup tomato purée**
- **1 Tbsp tomato paste**
- **½ tsp ground white pepper**
- **1 tsp salt**

### Béchamel sauce

- **2 Tbsp butter**
- **3 Tbsp flour**
- **Pinch nutmeg**
- **¼ tsp salt**
- **2½ cups milk**
- **1½ cups tasty cheese, grated (reserve ¼ cup to sprinkle on top before baking)**
- **400g packet fresh lasagne sheets**

**1** Heat 2 Tbsp of the oil in a large frying pan or heavy-based saucepan. Brown mince in two batches until lightly golden. Remove and place in a bowl. Put aside.

**2** Add remaining oil to the pan, add onion and sauté until translucent. Add garlic and herbs and sauté for a further 2 minutes. Pour in tomatoes, purée and paste. Turn up the heat and allow the sauce to simmer. Return the chicken and juices to the pan and bring sauce back to the boil. Turn down to a simmer and leave to cook on low for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season with ground white pepper and salt.

**3** Meanwhile prepare the béchamel sauce. Melt butter in a saucepan, sprinkle in the flour and stir. Cook for 2 minutes over a gentle heat. Add nutmeg and salt and stir well. Continue stirring and add the milk slowly, ½ cup at a time. Stir until the sauce begins to thicken and is smooth. Simmer on a low heat for 2 minutes then stir in 1¼ cups cheese. Season with white pepper. Stir well; simmer for 2 minutes then remove from heat.

**4** To compile the lasagne, grease a deep 24cm x 28cm baking dish. Add one large spoonful of bolognaise sauce to the base of the dish and cover with a layer of lasagne. Cover the pasta with additional bolognaise sauce. Drizzle half a ladle of béchamel over the bolognaise layer then cover with a pasta sheet and repeat. Finish with a sheet of pasta and cover with the remaining béchamel sauce. Sprinkle the reserved ¼ cup of grated cheese on top and place in an oven at 175°C for 35-40 minutes or until golden.

**5** Rest lasagne for 5 minutes after removing it from the oven. Cut into portions and serve with a crisp green salad.

## BBQ chicken with Asian slaw

READY IN: 8½ HOURS
SERVES: 4

- **2 tsp sesame oil**
- **2 cloves garlic, crushed**
- **2cm knob ginger, peeled, grated**
- **2 Tbsp kecap manis (see Glossary, page 141)**
- **1 Tbsp oyster sauce**
- **1 Tbsp fish sauce**
- **1 Tbsp honey**
- **600g chicken thighs, skinless and boneless**

### Asian coleslaw

- **½ savoy cabbage or use red or white cabbage**
- **2 carrots, peeled**
- **1 large red onion, finely sliced**
- **2 Tbsp chopped parsley or coriander**
- **2 Tbsp soy sauce**
- **2 Tbsp wine vinegar**
- **¼ cup + 2 Tbsp peanut oil**
- **3 Tbsp coriander, roughly chopped**
- **1 cup curled spring onion greens (see Cook's note below)**
- **Flat bread, to serve**

**1** To make a marinade for the chicken, mix together sesame oil, garlic, ginger, kecap manis, oyster sauce, fish sauce and honey. Pour into a large, lidded plastic container or large snaplock bag.

**2** Thickly slice chicken thigh fillets. Put into the marinade, cover and refrigerate to marinate overnight, or for at least 8 hours. If marinating in the morning for an evening barbecue, shake every few hours to ensure the pieces are evenly coated.

**3** To make the coleslaw, use a sharp knife or fine blender attachment and slice the cabbage very thinly. Put into a bowl. Grate the carrot as finely as possible. Add to the bowl with the onion and parsley or coriander.

**4** Place soy sauce, vinegar and peanut oil in a jar and shake vigorously. Pour this over the coleslaw ingredients. Use your hands to toss the mixture. Cover until ready to serve. If making in advance, you can cover and keep refrigerated for up to two days.

**5** Cook the chicken in batches in a very hot wok or on a barbecue flat plate. Leave generous amounts of the marinade on the chicken while cooking as this will caramelise to form a sauce.

**6** Place cooked chicken on a warm platter and scatter freshly cut coriander and curls of spring onion on top. Accompany with Asian coleslaw and warmed flat bread.

### COOK'S NOTE

To curl spring onions, cut off and discard the top section of the green tips, then wash the rest under cold water to remove the clear, gluey fluid. Cut the onion lengthways into thin slices and immerse in a bowl of iced water. Put aside until the slices have curled, then drain and use to liven up platters or dishes of Asian food.

FOR CHICKEN HANDLING AND STORING TIPS, SEE GLOSSARY, PAGE 141.

Props by LISA HONEYBONE