

Easy-to-prepare meals and accompanying drinks

Sausage & Fennel Ragu

BY RACHEL WALKER



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DETERMINATION, BORN OF CHRISTMAS GLUTTONY, is easy to muster in early January when time to digest and dry out is a welcome relief. But one month on—when the nights are still long and many of us are in full hibernation mode—I can't help but feel like it's the wrong time for enforced deprivation.

I think that moderation is always a far better strategy (see overleaf for more), and this recipe is a prime example. It's not piously healthy, but vitamin-packed tomatoes *are* a great thing to eat at this time of year.

Similarly, a sausage ragu is a cheap meal to produce. I implore you not to scrimp on budget ingredients here—an extra 50p goes a long way in the sausage aisle.

Serves 4

- 1tbsp olive oil
- 400g good-quality sausages
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 fennel, diced
- 2 sprigs of rosemary
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 175ml glass of red wine (or vegetable stock)
- ½tsp Lea & Perrins
- 1tsp sugar
- 400g chopped tomatoes

To serve: fresh tagliatelle and grated parmesan

1. Preheat the oven to 120C.
2. Use a sharp knife to cut a slit along the sausages, and



then squeeze the meat out of the sausage skin. Heat the oil in a casserole dish, and then fry the sausage meat at a high temperature. Don't move it in the pan too much—it needs to fry long enough in the oil to so it turns golden and crisp.

3. After 10 minutes add the onion, diced fennel, rosemary and garlic. Turn down the heat and cook for another 10 minutes, stirring from time to time.

4. Pour the wine into the pan and add a few splashes of Lea & Perrins, for depth of flavour. Finally, add the tomatoes and sugar. Let the sauce reach a gentle simmer, and then transfer the pan to the oven, and cook for a further 2 hours.

5. Five minutes before serving, bring a pan of salted water to the boil and cook the fresh tagliatelle. Drain, and then divide between four shallow pasta bowls.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIM & ZOE HILL

TOP 3 SAUSAGES

Debbie & Andrew's Perfect Pork Sausages, Waitrose, £3/400g

Tesco Finest Lincolnshire Sausages, Tesco, £2.50/400g

The Black Farmer Premium Pork Sausages, Morrisons, £2.97/400g

Marvellous Moderation

Of the 32 per cent of us who made a New Year's resolution, a whopping 66 per cent have broken it by now.

It begs the question of just how relevant the traditional New Year's resolution is anyway? Drastic lifestyle changes are generally shorter-lived than balanced alterations. A pledge to learn to cook new dishes, for example, is surely a better resolution than a crash diet.

This year, I joined the 11 per cent who picked booze as a target for their resolution. Instead of eliminating the joy of a glass of wine, my pledge is to drink less...but more adventurously. A happy half-way house!

A good way to escape the familiar churn of supermarket selections is to look at subscription services. You don't need to commit to a case per



month. For example, Humble Grape offer a brilliant and bespoke service for £27.50/month, which results in the delivery of two 12-bottle cases of really interesting wines each year.

Beer lovers might enjoy Beerbods, which posts a different craft beer each week (starting at £36 for 12 weeks). Not only that, but subscribers can all log on for the live tasting at 9pm each Thursday to compare notes. In terms of spirits, a personal favourite is The Dram Team, which sends a out monthly tasting box of five 25ml drams, plus a special sixth (10ml) dram of a super-premium bottle.

It's sensible and pleasurable. Now, pass me a moderately sized glass.

SUBSCRIBE TO TASTE

- **Humble Grape**, from £27.50, humblegrape.co.uk
- **Beerbods**, from £36, beerbods.co.uk
- **The Dram Team**, from £26.99, thedramteam.co.uk



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pudding
of the
Month



Foolproof Pancakes

Makes roughly 8

- 120g plain flour
- 2 eggs
- 300ml milk
- 25g butter

1. Whisk together the flour and eggs. Slowly add the milk in a stream, whisking as you go, until there are no lumps and the batter has the consistency of thick double cream.
2. Melt the butter in a hot frying pan until it starts to foam. Tip half a ladle of batter into the pan, rocking it until there is an even coating of batter.
3. When the batter starts to come away from the pan and bubble round the edges (after 40 seconds), flip the pancake with a palette knife, and cook it for another 30 seconds the other side.
4. Add your chosen topping and eat straight away!

Tip Sweetpea Pantry Pancake Mix (£4.99, Ocado) is a good gluten-free alternative to flour. ■

BOOK



nationalcookeryschool guide.com Not a book, but a free online guide to the UK's best cookery schools.

BARGAIN



greatbritishchefs.com Another free resource, with great instructional videos to enhance skills.

BLOW OUT



Le Manoir Cooking Class, from £120. Learn from the best during an evening class or course.