

Easy-to-prepare meals and accompanying drinks

# Fish Pie With A Cheesy Mash Topping

BY RACHEL WALKER



Rachel Walker is a food writer for numerous national publications. Visit [rachel-walker.co.uk](http://rachel-walker.co.uk) for more details

SPRING IS A GREAT TIME FOR FISH PIE. This warming dish will get you through the last of the long evenings, while you wait for the clocks go forward. Some people take a conservative approach to this dish, but I think that a bit of cheese in the mash topping goes down a treat—and it's one of the few dinners where I condone ketchup on the plate, too. Serve with a big bowl of green peas or steamed leeks, and enjoy the luxury of proper comfort food.

## Serves 4

- 750g potatoes (King Edward)
- 300g cod (see chef's note on the right)
- 200g smoked haddock
- 1 bay leaf
- 5 peppercorns
- 500ml milk
- 40g butter
- 40g plain flour
- Seasoning: 1tsp mustard, squeeze of lemon, salt, pepper
- 120g Cheddar, grated
- 25g butter

Pie dish: 20 x 28cm

1. Preheat the oven to 200C.
2. Peel the potatoes and cut them into bite-sized chunks. Put them in a pan of salted water, then bring to the boil and simmer for 15–20 minutes.
3. Put the fish in a small saucepan with the bay leaf and



peppercorns, and pour the milk over. Bring it to the boil, and then immediately reduce to a simmer.

Gently poach for 5–6 minutes, then strain the poaching milk into a jug. Discard the bay leaf and peppercorns, and flake the fish into a pie dish.

4. Rinse the pan used for the fish, and melt the butter in it. Add the flour. Stir and cook for 45 seconds on a very gentle heat.

5. Start adding the poaching milk—one tablespoon at a time to start with, stirring as you go—and then in bigger sloshes. Once all the milk has been added, simmer for 1–2 minutes, stirring the whole time.

6. Season the white sauce with mustard, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Pour the sauce into the pie dish and fold the fish through it. Set aside to settle.

7. Drain the potatoes and mash in the butter and three-quarters of the grated cheese. Spoon the mash on top of the fish pie, and then use the back of a spoon to push it into a pie lid.

8. Sprinkle the remaining cheese on top. Put the pie on a tray and bake for 25 minutes.

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## CHEF'S NOTE

People have long been wary about cooking with cod, but it came off the conservation "red list" 18 months ago. It's a lovely white fish for a pie, though there are lots of lesser-known varieties, which also have firm white flesh—such as pollock, coley or whiting. Adding an additional smoked fish, such as haddock, enhances the flavour and savouriness.

# Drinking Measures

“There’s a problem with ‘the pint,’” says Ed Hughs, Sharp’s beer sommelier. I’m perched on a bar stool, with a brandy glass of beer in hand.

I swill the sample round the balloon glass, and stick my nose in to give it a good sniff. “See!” Hughs shouts triumphantly. “All you need to do is change the shape of the glass, and suddenly people start tasting, instead of swigging.”

There’s no denying that a pint has its place, yet it’s out of kilter with the emerging beer trends. Particularly when pairing with food, a pint feels heavy. Pour small amounts into a brandy or wine glass, and suddenly the beer has room to breathe. You can also share a bottle with friends, which means you can try several



different varieties over the course of a meal.

Innovation in the market means it’s easy to put on your own DIY beer pairing. Start with a G&T using Tarquin’s Hopster gin, which has hops as a botanical. A half or quarter-pint of Sea Fury pairs well with food, due to its malty robustness, and is a winning combination with a fish pie.

Finish with porter or stout as an alternative to a pudding wine, as the coffee-caramel notes pair well with desserts. Sharp’s 6 Vintage Blend also has dark stewed-fruit cake notes—a drop in a sherry glass with dessert will convert even non-beer drinkers.

## THE DINNER BEERS

- **The Hopster, Tarquin’s Cornish Gin,** £39/70cl (42%), [sharpsbrewery.co.uk](http://sharpsbrewery.co.uk)
- **Sharps Sea Fury,** £1.79/500ml (5%), [tesco.com](http://tesco.com)
- **Meantime London Stout,** £2.15/500ml (4.5%), [ocado.com](http://ocado.com)
- **No.9 6 Vintage Blend,** £35/12 case (7.4%), [sharpsbrewery.co.uk](http://sharpsbrewery.co.uk)



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## Cornish Baked Custard Puddings

### Serves 6

- 400ml double cream
- 100ml whole milk
- 8 egg yolks
- 1 vanilla pod
- 75g sugar

Toppings: poached rhubarb, clementines, tinned prunes, shortbread biscuits—or whatever you fancy!

1. Scrape the vanilla seeds from the pod.
2. Add the scraped pod to the cream and milk and heat gently, until just simmering.
3. Mix the egg yolks, vanilla seeds and sugar until they’re creamy.
4. Pour the hot cream over the yolks, mixing continually. Remove the pod and discard.
5. Divide the custard into 6 oven-proof dishes, and bake in a *bain marie* at 140C for 30 minutes.
6. Cool, and place in the fridge until needed. Before serving, garnish with a topping of your choice.

**Tip:** pair with a stout or Sharp’s 6 Vintage blend. 

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## BOOK



**Gatherings** by Flora Sheddan, Mitchell Beazley, £17.99. Recipes for feasts great and small.

## BARGAIN



**Mug, H&M, £6.99.** This supersize teacup has great capacity, and I love the splash of gold on the handle.

## BLOW OUT



**Teacup set, Sophie Conran, £80.** Bright and beautiful, this four-piece sunshine-yellow set just shouts spring!