

ASK THE EXPERTS

OUR PANEL ANSWERS YOUR CULINARY QUESTIONS, INCLUDING WHERE TO FIND FEIJOA AND WHICH CHRISTMAS MEAL KITS ARE WORTH A TRY

THE EXPERTS



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Where can I take a cooking class in Tuscany?

Emiko Davies: There are some great classes to help you learn how to harness the secrets behind Tuscany’s wonderful food culture. Raffaella Cova (lunchwithraffaella.com) is a private cook who offers classes in her historic home in Montalcino for an experience that feels like a day among friends: eating, cooking and drinking together. She’ll create a custom menu based on your level and preferences — it might be fresh ravioli filled with ricotta and local veg, or hand-rolled picci (thick spaghetti), followed by a seasonal dessert.

In a charming garden in the centre of Florence, the young and talented chef Francesco Lomanno and his sommelier brother Filippo, also known as F alla Seconda (‘f squared’, effeallaseconda.com), traded in their restaurant to devote themselves to hands-on, themed cooking classes in their beautifully restored family home. Simple enough for beginners, Francesco’s menus contain original dishes, updated classics and excellent Italian ingredients. You’ll collect an arsenal of chef’s techniques along the way — perfect for those who want to learn how to make restaurant-worthy meals.

Where can I find feijoa in the UK and how do I use it?

Elle Hunt: Feijoa is a kind of guava that grows on small trees belonging to the myrtle family. It’s native to southern Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and parts of Argentina, but flourishes in mild, dry climates such as Colombia, Azerbaijan, New Zealand and parts of the US and Australia.

The fruit has smooth, green skin, a fragrant, almost floral smell and a polarising taste — it’s sometimes described as soapy and almost medicinal. It’s usually eaten like a kiwi, with the grainy, pear-like flesh scooped out with a teaspoon.

Feijoa can also be used as a filling in baking, in jams and chutneys, and to flavour ice cream, smoothies, confectionery and even alcohol. Imported feijoa can occasionally be spotted in supermarkets or boutique grocers, but it tends to be expensive.

If you can’t find the fruit, you may have to settle for the flavour. Heather’s Feijoas makes feijoa powder and freeze-dried ‘feijoa intensified’ wedges, which are available via its website (heathersfeijoas.com) and via online boutique Feijoa Studio (fejoastudio.com). Products can also be found in shops serving expat New Zealanders, like sanza.co.uk.



Can you recommend some Christmas meal kits?

Delle Chan: DIY meal kits are great for simplifying meal prep and recreating restaurant-quality dishes at home. For a decadent Christmas spread, try Home by Simon Rogan’s 5-Course Meal (from £95 per person, homebysimonrogan.co.uk), featuring truffled celeriac soup, pine-cured smoked salmon, a slab of Goosnargh turkey, Christmas pudding with brandy crème anglaise and mince pie chocolates. Everything comes cooked; all you need to do is heat it up and serve. You can also jazz up the meal with extras such as caviar, a cheese selection or a wine flight curated by L’Enclume’s sommelier.

Bigger groups should try Abel & Cole’s The Turkey Christmas Feast Box, Organic (£175, serves six to eight, abelandcole.co.uk), which comes with a step-by-step recipe booklet. The highlight is a KellyBronze roast turkey with all the trimmings: rosemary spuds, lemon-and-thyme brussels sprouts and Yorkshire pudding. A magnum of Giol prosecco is included, too.

After something less traditional? Swap turkey for lamb with Ibérica’s Spanish-themed Feast at Home menu (£65 per person, ibericarestaurants.com), which arrives prepped and portioned. The hearty spread includes slow-cooked lamb leg with roast potatoes and sweet red peppers, bellota ham, torrezno (a fried bacon snack), manzanilla olives and Cantabrian sea anchovies, all rounded off with cheesecake.

For non-meat-eaters, Hame by Adam Handling has put together a Christmas Day Package (£250, serves two to four, adamhandling.co.uk) containing a veggie wellington, cheese doughnuts, mulled wine and a brandy-and-vanilla pudding.

What’s a good recipe for curry goat?

You can use boneless or bone-in goat for this iconic Caribbean dish — and if you can’t find goat, mutton is a suitable alternative.

SERVES: 4-6 **TAKES: 3 HRS, PLUS A FEW HOURS MARINATING**

INGREDIENTS

- 1.35kg goat, cut into 3-4cm chunks
- 5 tbsp curry powder
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp ground allspice
- 2 tsp ground turmeric
- 4 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 400ml can coconut milk
- 3 spring onions, sliced
- large handful fresh thyme sprigs
- 8 baby potatoes, peeled and halved
- 1 scotch bonnet pepper

METHOD

1 Put the goat in a bowl and add 2 tbsp of the curry powder, the ginger, allspice, turmeric, 1 tsp salt and 1 tsp black pepper.

Stir, cover and marinate in the fridge for a few hours (ideally up to eight hours).

2 Heat the oil in a large pot set over a medium heat and add 1 tsp of the curry powder, along with the onion and garlic. Cook for 2-3 mins until dark brown, then add a little of the coconut milk to create a thick paste.

3 Add the goat and sauté until brown all over. Pour in 250ml water and the remaining coconut milk, then cover and cook over a medium heat for up to 2 hrs or until tender, stirring occasionally and adding 2 tbsp more curry powder halfway through. Add more water during cooking if necessary and mix in the remaining curry powder, to taste.

4 Tip in the spring onions, thyme, potatoes and scotch bonnet and cook for a further 15 mins. Remove the scotch bonnet (or leave it in longer for a spicier taste).

5 Cover and cook for 30 mins more until the meat is very tender; it should be falling off the bone if you’ve used bone-in goat.

Taken from Original Flava by Craig and Shaun McNuff (£22, Bloomsbury)



IMAGES: EMIKO DAVIES; TIM GREEN; MATT RUSSELL