



book extract

brunch at Bitton

For 10 years, Bitton Café & Grocer has been one of Sydney's most popular local eateries. Now chef-owner David Bitton's cookbook means you can eat cafe-style at home.





Apple tarts (recipe page 110).
Opposite from top: David at Eveleigh
Farmers' Market with daughter Monet;
sourdough with tomatoes, goat's
cheese and basil oil (recipe page 112).



My philosophy and approach to food is to provide people with a feeling of coming home. My cooking comes from the sense of 'open house' where the host welcomes guests to the table and introduces the passion they feel for produce and the preparation of dishes. This philosophy is reflected in my cafe, Bitton Café and Grocer, in the Sydney suburb of Alexandria.

I did my formal training as a chef in France. My first job was hell! However, I quickly realised food is about the journey and discovering new experiences, which may explain why I moved to Australia impulsively when I was 22. After 18 years of working in five-star restaurants, my wife Sohani and I decided to open our own cafe in 2000.

During the day, we worked at the cafe and at night, we began making our own jams and preserves in our kitchen at home. I can still smell the strawberry jam that permeated our apartment! From these humble beginnings, our red-labelled Bitton range of products was born.

Food is not just about eating. It is about memories; it is about influences, and it is about enjoyment. The recipes in *Bitton: A French-Inspired Café Book* are a mixture of old favourites from the cafe, which I wouldn't dare take off the menu for fear of my regulars causing a riot, and food I love cooking for friends and family.

David



THREE-CHEESE AND HAM OMELETTES

- SERVES: 4
- PREPARATION: 15 MINS
- COOKING: 25 MINS

50g firm blue cheese, crumbled
 50g goat's cheese, crumbled
 50g gruyère, finely grated
 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
 2 tbs finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
 100g ham, finely chopped
 12 free-range or organic eggs
 160ml (⅔ cup) pouring cream
 100g butter, chopped

4 slices wholegrain bread, toasted, cut into triangles
 Bitton Spicy Tomato Sauce* or tomato relish (optional), to serve

1 Combine cheeses in a bowl, and garlic, parsley and ham in a second bowl.
2 Working in 4 batches, whisk together 3 eggs and 2 tbs cream in a bowl. Melt one-quarter of the butter in a 20cm omelette or non-stick frying pan over medium heat until it starts to foam. Add one-quarter of the ham mixture and cook for 1 minute, then pour in the egg and cream mixture, and swirl the pan to coat the base. Using a spatula,

Below left: banana muffins.
Bottom right: David Bitton
(pictured left) with manager
Andy. Opposite: three-cheese
and ham omelette.



+ These muffins can be adapted to suit your tastes. Add some seasonal fruit or a handful of chocolate chips for a more decadent treat.

BANANA MUFFINS

You will need 12 paper cases.

- MAKES: 12
- PREPARATION: 25 MINS
- COOKING: 25 MINS

375g (2½ cups) self-raising flour
½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
220g (1 cup firmly packed) brown sugar
250ml (1 cup) buttermilk
2 free-range or organic eggs
80ml (⅓ cup) vegetable oil
2 large (about 460g) overripe bananas, mashed
Bitton Strawberry & Vanilla Jam* or your favourite jam, and butter, to serve

- 1 Preheat oven to 180C. Line a 12-hole (80ml/⅓ cup) muffin pan with the 12 paper cases. Set the pan aside.
- 2 Sift flour with bicarbonate of soda into a large bowl. Add sugar, stir until combined. Make a well in the centre.
- 3 Whisk buttermilk, eggs, oil and bananas in a large jug. Pour banana mixture into the well in the bowl and stir until just combined (don't overstir; the secret to good muffins is a quick, folding motion until just combined).
- 4 Spoon the batter among paper cases and bake for 25 minutes or until the

muffins are golden and the centres spring back when lightly pressed.

5 Serve warm muffins with Bitton Strawberry & Vanilla Jam, and butter.

* See note for omelettes.

TIP

- For taller muffins in rustic-style paper cases, use Multix Cafe Collection Muffin Wraps from the baking section of supermarkets.

lift the cooked edge, then tilt the pan to allow the uncooked egg mixture to coat the base and the edge of the pan. Cook for 2 minutes or until slightly golden but still wobbly. Scatter over one-quarter of the cheeses, then cook for a further minute or until cheeses start to melt, then fold the omelette in half. Slide onto a warm plate and cover to keep warm while cooking the remaining 3 omelettes.

3 Serve three-cheese and ham omelettes with wholegrain toast and Bitton Spicy Tomato Sauce or tomato relish, if using.
* Bitton products are available from the cafe or online, bittongourmet.com.au.





Little chocolate friands with candied orange



+ *For a change of flavour, top with candied lemon zest, diced apple or a swirl of pureed raspberry.*

LITTLE CHOCOLATE FRIANDS WITH CANDIED ORANGE

These friands make a great gluten-free treat. Allow an extra 2 hours to soak the orange zest. You'll need 3 x 12-hole (30ml/1½ tbs) mini-muffin pans.

- **MAKES: 36**
- **PREPARATION: 25 MINS**
- **COOKING: 1 HR**

- 6 free-range or organic egg whites
- 80g (½ cup) icing sugar
- 90g (½ cup) rice flour
- 1 tbs Dutch cocoa*
- 1 vanilla bean, seeds scraped
- 120g (1 cup) ground almonds
- 150g unsalted butter, melted, cooled slightly

CANDIED ORANGE

- 2 oranges
- 330g (1½ cups) caster sugar

1 To make candied orange, using a vegetable peeler, peel orange zest in long, wide strips, avoiding white pith. Place in a bowl, cover with cold water and soak for 2 hours. Drain, then cut into julienne (matchsticks). Place zest in a small pan with 2cm of water. Bring to the boil, then drain. Repeat process 3 times (this helps remove bitterness).

2 Place 500ml (2 cups) water and sugar in a pan over low heat. Stir until sugar dissolves. Increase heat to medium and bring to the boil. Add zest and simmer over low heat for 40 minutes or until zest is translucent and syrup is thick. Strain through a sieve and cool zest on a wire rack. Reserve syrup for another use.

3 Meanwhile, to make friands, preheat oven to 170C. Grease muffin pans. Using a balloon whisk, beat egg whites in a large bowl until frothy. Sift over sugar, flour and cocoa, add vanilla, ground almonds and a pinch of salt, and stir to combine. Gradually stir in butter until combined. Fill pan holes two-thirds full with batter. Bake for 10 minutes, swapping the pans halfway, or until firm. Remove from oven and cool in pans for 5 minutes, then turn out onto wire racks to cool completely.

4 Top each chocolate friand with strips of candied orange to serve.

* Dutch cocoa is available from delis.

TIP

- Reserved orange sugar syrup will keep in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 1 month. Toss with fruit salad or drizzle over pancakes.

APPLE TARTS

These make a classy finish to any meal.

- **MAKES: 8**
- **PREPARATION: 30 MINS**
- **COOKING: 35 MINS**

- 375g packet frozen puff pastry,* thawed
 - 3 (about 600g) granny smith apples
 - 1½ tbs caster sugar
 - 1 vanilla bean, seeds scraped
 - 30g unsalted butter
 - 50g apricot jam, melted
- Double cream or mascarpone, to serve

1 To prepare tarts, roll out pastry on a lightly floured sheet of baking paper until 4mm thick. Using a floured 10cm pastry cutter, cut 8 rounds from pastry, re-flouring each time you cut. Place rounds 3cm apart on a large oven tray lined with baking paper. Using a sharp knife, score a 5mm border on each round. Using a fork, prick pastry inside borders. Refrigerate until needed.

2 To make apple purée for filling, peel, core and quarter half the apples. Place in a saucepan with 1½ tbs water over low heat. Add sugar and vanilla, and stir to combine. Cover with a lid and cook for 10 minutes, then remove lid and cook for a further 5 minutes or until apples are soft and pulpy, and the liquid has evaporated. Cool. Press apple mixture through a fine sieve to purée.

3 Peel, core and halve the remaining apples. Using a mandolin or sharp knife, cut apples into paper-thin slices.

4 Preheat oven to 250C. Divide apple purée among centres of tarts. Starting from the centre, arrange apple slices slightly overlapping to cover purée. Brush butter on pastry edges. Bake tarts on the bottom shelf of the oven for 10 minutes. Reduce oven to 180C and bake for a further 6 minutes or until pastry is golden and apples are slightly caramelised.

5 Remove tarts from oven and brush tops with jam to glaze. Serve tarts immediately with double cream.

* We used Carème All Butter Puff Pastry. Available from delis. Details, caremepastry.com.

Bitton-style
croque-madames
with green salad



SOURDOUGH WITH TOMATOES, GOAT'S CHEESE & BASIL OIL

- SERVES: 4
- PREPARATION: 20 MINS
- COOKING: 5 MINS

4 slices sourdough bread,
toasted

2 vine-ripened tomatoes,
thickly sliced

50g goat's cheese, crumbled

BASIL OIL

1¼ cups (firmly packed) basil leaves

100g baby spinach leaves

½ bunch flat-leaf parsley, leaves
picked, roughly chopped

200ml olive oil

1 To make the basil oil, bring a large saucepan of water to the boil. Add basil and spinach, and blanch for 30 seconds or until wilted. Drain immediately and refresh in iced water. Drain well. Process basil mixture, parsley and oil in a food processor to a purée. Season with salt and freshly ground white pepper. Basil oil will keep in an airtight container for up to 3 days. Makes 375ml (1½ cups).

2 Divide toasted sourdough among plates. Top with tomato and scatter with goat's cheese. Drizzle generously with basil oil and season with sea salt to serve.

TIP

- Combine the remaining basil oil with lemon juice for a fresh Niçoise salad dressing.

BITTON-STYLE CROQUE-MADAMES WITH GREEN SALAD

A croque-madame is a croque-monsieur – a French grilled ham and cheese sandwich – but with the addition of an egg on top. My version includes a velvety mornay sauce (béchamel enriched with gruyère) that makes this dish taste unbelievable.

- SERVES: 4
- PREPARATION: 30 MINS
- COOKING: 20 MINS

12 slices rustic-style white bread

70g butter, softened

8 slices ham

200g mozzarella, finely grated

4 free-range or organic eggs

Bitton Spicy Tomato Sauce or tomato relish (optional),* to serve

MORNAY SAUCE

75g butter, chopped

500ml (2 cups) milk

50g (½ cup) plain flour

1 pinch grated nutmeg

50g gruyère, finely grated

1 free-range or organic egg yolk

VINAIGRETTE

1 small eschalot, finely chopped

100ml red wine vinegar

1 free-range or organic egg yolk

200ml vegetable oil

1 tsp Dijon mustard

GREEN SALAD

100g salad leaves, washed

2 vine-ripened tomatoes,
thinly sliced

4 Swiss brown mushrooms,
thinly sliced

1 To clarify butter for mornay sauce, melt butter in a small pan over low heat. Ladle clear butter into a large saucepan, avoiding white milk solids. Discard solids.

2 To make mornay sauce, bring milk to the boil in a saucepan, then reduce heat to low-medium. Place pan with clarified butter over medium heat, then whisk in flour. Cook, stirring, for 2 minutes or until dry and grainy. Remove from heat, then gradually whisk in hot milk until smooth. Return pan to heat and whisk until sauce boils and thickens. Remove from heat. Whisk in nutmeg, cheese and egg yolk. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside to cool slightly.

3 Meanwhile, to make vinaigrette, place eschalot and vinegar in a bowl and set aside to marinate for 15 minutes. Add remaining ingredients, season, then whisk to combine. Reserve 2 tbs for salad. The remaining vinaigrette will keep in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 3 days. Makes 300ml.

4 Preheat grill to high. Place bread in three rows of four on an oven tray. Spread 50g butter to the edges of all the slices. On the middle row, place 2 slices of ham on each slice of bread. Spread mornay sauce to the edges of all slices (this prevents bread drying out), and scatter generously with mozzarella. Stack rows to make 4 croque-madames with 3 tiers (the ham will be in the top centre). Place on an oven tray and grill for 5 minutes or until golden.

5 Meanwhile, melt remaining 20g butter in a large, non-stick frying pan. Fry eggs for 2 minutes or until the whites are cooked and yolks are runny.

6 To make salad, toss all ingredients in a bowl with reserved 2 tbs vinaigrette.

7 Cut each croque-madames in half on the diagonal, then divide among plates and top each with a fried egg. Serve immediately with green salad and Bitton Spicy Tomato Sauce, if using.

* See note, page 109. (TM)

Bitton: A French-Inspired Café Cookbook by David Bitton, \$40. From good bookstores and online at bittongourmet.com.au. Bitton Café & Grocer, 36–37a Copeland St, Alexandria, NSW, (02) 9519 5111.