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# FIT FOOD

## *in a flash*

*Create amazing taste sensations with these easy-to-prepare recipes from Laura Santtini*



*Guacamole is packed with antioxidants. Try it with asparagus.*



**LAURA'S TOP 10 FLAVOURS**

- ◆ Extra virgin olive oil. 'I use it as a drizzle and on salads,' says Santtini.
- ◆ Harissa – a hot sauce made from chillies, red peppers, garlic, oil and spices.
- ◆ Santtini's own world-first creation, Taste No 5 Umami Paste (£2.95 for 70g, harveynichols.com).
- ◆ Fresh lemons add a delicious citrus tang to dressings, yoghurts and pastes.
- ◆ Soy sauce. Buy a good-quality low-salt version and use it to add an Asian flavour.
- ◆ A good quality curry paste mixed with tamarind paste and olive oil makes a delicious glaze.
- ◆ Herbes de Provence – a fragrant blend of dried herbs that's the essence of the Mediterranean.
- ◆ Garam masala. For a fresher flavour make your own, grinding whole spices in a mill.
- ◆ Five-spice powder with star anise, cinnamon, Sichuan peppercorns, fennel seeds and whole cloves.
- ◆ Baharat, a mix of black pepper, cumin, coriander, cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, paprika and nutmeg.

**A**uthor and culinary alchemist Laura Santtini has been called the world's first 'gastro-therapist', providing solace and comfort through her foodie creations. If only all therapy were this tasty! In her new book *Flash Cooking* (Quadrille, £20), Santtini offers a new, exciting way to whip up healthy everyday meals that are bursting with intense and wonderful flavours. 'Flavour is my passion. I'm fascinated with flavour in a geeky, train-spotting kind of way,' says Santtini.

Drawing on gastronomic influences from all four corners of the globe, Santtini has developed recipes for 'flavour bombs' that you can use to create a vast range of dishes. They include four seasonings – Western, Middle Eastern, Indian and Far Eastern – plus glazes for fish or meat, pastes, 'finishing salts' for sprinkling, 'finishing yoghurts' to serve on the side, dressings for salads, and rubinades, which are a mix between a rub and a marinade. 'Creating these flavours has been a revelation to me – like clearing out a wardrobe and finding several outfits that just work perfectly together,' says Santtini.

Her *Flash Cooking* is all about fast, nutritious, flavourful food that's easy to whip up, tastes extraordinary and boosts wellbeing. 'I'm not interested in dieting but I wanted to create an eating regime I could follow all my life, flash cooking 80 per cent of the time and keeping indulgences just for the weekend.'

Santtini believes food and emotions are inextricably linked and that a new attitude to food can transform your wellbeing. 'I have more energy, my jeans are looser and my brain is brighter', she claims. Following the principle of all things in moderation and mostly eating plant foods, she keeps food simple.

WORDS: Margaret Barrett

**QUICK TIP** Stir 1tsp ground turmeric, 1tbsp chopped coriander and 1tsp mango or lime chutney into 3tbsp live Greek-style yoghurt as a refreshing finish to an Indian feast.

**Baked seasoned sweet potatoes with matcha guacamole**

**Serves 2**

**Per serving:** 328 calories; 3.5g protein; 16g fat (of which 3.5g saturated fat); 43g carbohydrate (of which 13g sugar); 9g fibre; 0.3g salt

2 sweet potatoes, scrubbed but unpeeled  
1tbsp olive oil  
Sea salt and black pepper

**For the herbes de Provence flash seasoning**

2tbsp dried rosemary  
1tbsp dried oregano  
1tbsp dried thyme  
1tbsp dried savory  
1tbsp dried tarragon

**For the turmeric and chutney finishing yoghurt**

3tbsp Greek-style yoghurt  
1tsp ground turmeric  
1tbsp chopped coriander leaves  
1tsp mango and/or lime chutney

**For the matcha guacamole**

2 ripe avocados, peeled and stones removed  
Juice of one lime  
1tsp matcha tea  
1 large red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped  
2 tomatoes, finely chopped  
1 small red onion, finely chopped  
1 bunch coriander, finely chopped

- 1 Pre-heat the oven to 180°C/gas mark 4. Slice the sweet potatoes in half lengthways, drizzle with the olive oil and sprinkle with the mixed herb seasoning and a little salt and pepper.
- 2 Bake the seasoned sweet potatoes in the pre-heated oven for 30 minutes until they're soft and oozing.
- 3 Meanwhile, mix the yoghurt ingredients and make the guacamole. Place the avocado flesh, lime juice and matcha in a blender, and blend to a smooth paste. Place this in a bowl and stir in the remaining ingredients. Season and set aside.
- 4 Serve the sweet potatoes with a dollop each of guacamole and the turmeric and chutney finishing yoghurt.

YOU TIME



Miso is rich in vitamin B12, zinc and manganese. Top it up with udon or brown rice noodles

## Quick miso Monday soup

**Serves 2**

**Per serving:** 95 calories; 12g protein; 2g fat (of which 0.1g saturated fat) 5g carbohydrate (of which 2g sugar); 2.5g fibre; 0.8g salt

- 1 litre of good chicken stock*
- Good handful of shelled raw prawns*
- 1 thumb-sized piece of fresh ginger root, cut into slices*
- 1 red chilli, thinly sliced (deseeded for less heat)*
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced*
- 3 dried shiitake mushrooms*
- 2 handfuls of mangetout*
- 2 handfuls of baby spinach leaves*
- 2 spring onions, cut into 2cm lengths*
- 2tsp miso paste (preferably light)*
- Handful of coriander, chopped*

- 1** Put the stock, prawns, ginger, chilli, garlic and shiitake mushrooms in a large saucepan.
- 2** Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 20 minutes.
- 3** When broth-like and no longer watery, add the mangetout, spinach and spring onion. Continue cooking until the mangetout become tender but are still al dente.
- 4** Remove from the heat and whisk in the miso paste and the chopped coriander.



Enhance this wheat-free crust with harissa, garam masala or chopped fresh herbs or nuts.

### Flash Ma-Yo-Crusted salmon fillets

Serves 2

**Per serving:** 404 calories; 32g protein; 30g fat (of which 6g saturated fat) 0.6g carbohydrate (of which 0.6g sugar); 0.8g fibre; 0.2g salt

*A little olive oil  
2 firm fillets of salmon (or cod or haddock)  
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper  
¼ tsp light mayonnaise  
1½ tbsp live Greek-style yoghurt  
Grated zest of 1 lime and a squeeze of juice, plus lime wedges to serve  
¼ tsp furikake or sesame seeds, plus more for sprinkling  
¼ tsp chopped chives*

**1** Pre-heat the oven to 180°C/gas mark 4. Brush an ovenproof dish with a little olive oil to stop the fish from sticking and place the fillets in it. Season each with a little sea salt and black pepper.

**2** Mix the mayonnaise, yoghurt, lime zest and juice, furikake or sesame seeds and chopped chives together in a bowl.

**3** Top the fish fillets with this zesty mayonnaise mixture to make a crust about 5mm thick.

**4** Cover with foil and place in the oven for 10 minutes, then remove the foil and leave in the oven for a further five minutes, or until it's golden and bubbling and the fish is cooked through.

**5** Serve the crusted fish fillets with lime wedges on the side. ■



Recipes taken from *Flash Cooking* by Laura Santtini (Quadrille, £20). To buy the book at the special price of £17 inc p&p, please call direct on 01256 302699 quoting reference 6GP and your credit card details.

## TASTE TEST MINCE PIES

After all that healthy eating and exercise, why not tuck into these festive treats.

Marks & Spencer  
Luxury All Butter Mini Mince Pies, £2.19 for nine; [marksandspencer.co.uk](http://marksandspencer.co.uk)

These tasted the most traditional and are nicely finished with a crimped edge and crisp pastry. We preferred these slightly warmed for a more indulgent taste. And with only 105 calories and 4.1g fat, you can have more than one!



Genius Foods Gluten-free Mince Pies, £1.99 for four; [tesco.com](http://tesco.com)



These regular-sized mince pies are gluten-free, wheat-free and veggie, but they're not kind to your waistline, with 200 calories and 5.8g of fat. The pastry is a little powdery and the filling quite runny. However they taste wonderfully rich and indulgent, with plump sultanas. Be prepared to get a scattering of crumbs on your Crimbo frock.

Tesco Christmas Mini Mince Pies, £2 for 12; [tesco.com](http://tesco.com)

These mini pies have just 80 calories and 2.7g fat each. The sugar sprinkled on top adds unnecessary sweetness and the thick, buttery shortcrust pastry overpowers the small amount of filling in these dainty mince pies. The filling is fruity and rich, but has been finely chopped to pack more into the pie.



Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Mini Mince Pies, £2.25 for nine; [sainsburys.co.uk](http://sainsburys.co.uk)



Topped with a star-shaped piece of pastry, this mince pie gives the impression you're not eating as much pastry as with the others although it does contain 3.8g fat and 104 calories. The filling is moist and rich with a strong Christmassy flavour. The pastry is buttery and soft, making it a real melt in the mouth treat.

Waitrose All Butter Mini Mince Pies, £2.79 for 12; [waitrose.com](http://waitrose.com)

Packed with a filling of apricot, glace cherries, almonds and brandy, these pies have a different flavour to the average mince pie. The apricots add a sweeter, more 'floral' flavour than the rich, deep taste you'd expect. The pastry is thick and brittle, which, no doubt, contributes to the 3.8g fat per pie and their overall greasiness.



YOU TIME