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The food author cooking
up a storm with recipes
using a trio of ingredients

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PHOTO: OSCAR KORINEI



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Hot List Page 18 »

Salmon soufflé in a hurry? **Claire Coleman** talks to the no-fuss cook who says it's as easy as...



BAKING has got so complex with things like Great British Bake Off. It's not just about a Victoria sponge, some muffins and a bit of shortbread – it's 12-tier, ombre-iced cakes with glitter unicorns. And that's amazing, but it's also overwhelming.

You can't deny that Sarah Rainey has a point. She's the author of a new book, *Three Ingredient Baking*, and a true cooking evangelist. 'I've baked

since I was a kid and I wanted other people to share that magic of putting random dry ingredients into a bowl and a cake coming out of the oven,' she says.

Determined to take baking back to basics for the masses, and inspired by similar trends in the US and Japan, she began working out exactly what you could do with the power of three.

And it is just three. 'Oil, salt, water, seasonings... these things all count,' she says. 'I have been really

disappointed in the past when I've bought restricted-ingredient recipe books and found that you actually need more than what they say, so I was very strict.'

There was a lot of trial and error involved. 'Yoghurt muffins were a disaster, they mostly pooled on the oven floor and those that didn't tasted like glue,' she tells us. But she's proud



So simple:
The finished salmon dish

of her scones (plain flour, double cream and a can of lemonade) and the brownies (an entire jar of Nutella, eggs and self-raising flour).

The recipes are seriously impressive.

Flicking through the book I find Irish soda bread, frozen Key lime pie, parmesan crispbread and even Christmas cake – all made from just three ingredients. It got me thinking, could I do a three-course meal made entirely of Sarah's recipes? A nine-ingredient dinner... As a fan of Middle Eastern cooking I know a single side dish can include nine ingredients, so I loved the simplicity

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of the idea and decided to give it a whirl.

I pick a menu of smoked salmon soufflés (smoked salmon, egg whites and shop-bought custard), asparagus tartlets (shop-bought puff pastry, Gruyère cheese and asparagus), and microwave meringues (icing sugar, egg whites and fresh berries).

It all seems highly improbable but my brother-in-law Johnny agrees to be my guinea pig, so I get going.

As I contemplate whisking five egg whites to make the soufflés, I can see why Sarah says her favourite utensil is her electric whisk. She explains: 'A lot of the recipes use air as an ingredient – the chocolate mousse is basically chocolate and water – so it's my saviour, a godsend.'

I'm sceptical about the combination of custard and smoked salmon but the soufflés are a work of genius – they rise perfectly and taste delicious – although in future I'd probably cheat on the three ingredients and serve with some crème fraîche and chives.

I do cheat with the asparagus tartlets

and serve them with a bit of green salad, but the tartlets would have looked a bit sad on their own.

And the microwave meringues which I simply can't believe will work, somehow do. If I'd added a blob of whipped cream, I'd have virtually had Eton Mess.

The whole thing took far less time than usual to make, and my nine ingredients cost around £20 and could easily have served four.

But as the proof of the pudding (or in this case soufflé, tart and meringue) is in the eating what did my lunch guest think?

'I'm genuinely surprised,' says Johnny. 'I didn't have particularly high expectations. I'd never have imagined you could make complete dishes that tasted so good.'

I agree. I'm blown away with what I've been able to achieve with so few ingredients, and it's been so much less stress than usual. I am totally sold on the power of three.

■ *Three Ingredient Baking by Sarah Rainey (£12.99) is out now, published by Michael Joseph, a Penguin imprint*



PHOTOS: JOHN GOWIN-ALAMY; GETTY

Three into two: Claire and Johnny taste test the meringue

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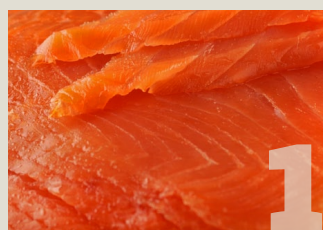
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SMOKED SALMON SOUFFLÉS

SERVES 6

- 100g (3½oz) smoked salmon
- 150g (5½oz) ready-made fresh custard (try a basic supermarket own-brand version, not the fancy kind – you don't want it too sweet)
- 5 egg whites

Preheat the oven to 220°C/fan 200°C/gas 7. Grease 6 small ramekins and arrange them in a deep baking tin. Place 80g (2¾oz) of the salmon into a bowl and use a fork to break it up into small pieces.

Add the custard, stir and leave to

infuse for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, whisk the egg whites until they form stiff peaks. Using a metal spoon, fold the egg whites into the custard mixture, a spoonful at a time. Mix gently until no lumps of egg remain and it's all combined.

Spoon into the ramekins, filling each one two-thirds full and ensuring there is an even salmon distribution.

Smooth the tops with the back of a spoon. Pour boiling water into the tin until it comes one-third of the way

up the ramekins. Bake for 15-18 minutes, until the soufflés have risen at least 2.5cm above the rims of the ramekins and are golden brown on top. Rotate the tin halfway through so they cook evenly.

Serve immediately, scattered with the remaining salmon, salt and black pepper – and, to really impress, a spoonful of soured cream and a sprinkle of chopped chives.



MICROWAVE MERINGUES

MAKES AROUND 15 LARGE MERINGUES

- 280g icing sugar
- 30g egg white (roughly 2 medium eggs, or 1 large egg)
- 3 passion fruit or a punnet of fresh berries, to serve

Sift the icing sugar into the egg white and mix roughly with a wooden spoon (do not whisk).

Using your hands, bring the mixture together into a ball. It should be the texture of thick paste.

Knead until it is all combined and has an even texture throughout, then divide into walnut-sized balls (if you want to be precise, each should weigh around 20g). Cut a circle of greaseproof paper to place over the turntable in the middle of the microwave. Arrange two balls, well spaced out, on the paper. Heat in the microwave for 40 to 50

seconds, watching closely through the door. They should puff up but not touch

one another. When they look big enough, stop the heat. If they need a little longer, add five seconds.

In my 700W microwave (category D), they take exactly 60 seconds. Don't worry if yours is different. The key is to watch carefully what happens through the glass.

Remove the greaseproof paper from the microwave, allow the meringues to cool for a few minutes and place on a wire rack. Repeat for the remainder of the batch.

Serve drizzled with passion fruit seeds and juice for a tasty dessert, or crumble into whipped cream and berries to make an Eton Mess.

Store in an airtight tin and they should keep for four or five days.





ASPARAGUS TARTLETS

MAKES 4

- 1 sheet ready-rolled frozen puff pastry
- 100g (3½oz) fresh asparagus tips
- 90g (3¼oz) Gruyère cheese, grated

Take the pastry out of the freezer to defrost. While it's coming to room temperature, prepare and cook the asparagus tips. I snip each stem into three pieces and griddle them for around eight minutes with a little seasoning and olive oil. You'll know the asparagus is ready when it's juicy and tender and has a slightly charred look.

Use tongs to remove the asparagus from the pan, and reserve the cooking oil in the pan to brush the tart cases. Once the

pastry has defrosted, unroll it and use a sharp knife to divide it into four portions. Remove from the original paper, and space a few centimetres apart on a new piece of greaseproof paper laid on a baking sheet.

Carefully draw a smaller rectangle around 1cm inside the edges of each tartlet, scoring but not cutting through the pastry. This marks the inner area where the filling will go – the edges will puff up in the oven. Dip a pastry brush in the oil left in the pan and brush it over the pastry rectangles. Pile

the cheese in even portions in the inner rectangle of each tartlet.

Arrange the asparagus on top, splitting it equally between the tartlets.

Place the tartlets in the fridge for ten minutes to firm up.

While the tartlets are chilling, preheat the oven to 195°C/fan 175°C/gas 5½. Bake for 35 minutes, or until the pastry is puffed up and golden. Use a fish slice to

take each one off the baking sheet. These tartlets make a delicious starter, served hot or cold with a few green leaves on the side.



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Sarah and, inset,
her new book



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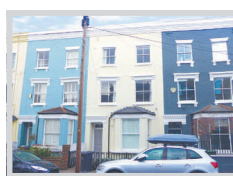
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