

Roasted carrots with spiced pumpkin seeds, peaches and crème fraîche

Carrots simply roasted with honey or agave syrup and some herbs is pretty much carrot heaven, says Rob Howell.

And the Bristol-based chef should certainly know as his new cookbook, named after his restaurant Root, is all about 'small vegetable plates, a little meat on the side'.

And he does veg beautifully, imbuing humble green things with delicacy, panache and intrigue.

In the book, Rob bakes courgette ragu inside a marrow, turns swede into tagliatelle, fills chicory leaves with apple, gives parsnips the hasselback treatment, and amplifies pears and strawberries like you wouldn't believe (he even stuffs doughnuts with carrot jam).

This stunning recipe also stand out.

"The peaches in this recipe are always a lovely addition, but you could also use apricots, pears or, if you wanted something a little more exotic," adds Rob.



INGREDIENTS (Serves 4)

For the spiced pumpkin seeds:

100g pumpkin seeds

1 pinch of paprika

1 pinch of allspice

1 pinch of ground coriander

For the pickled carrot:

1 carrot, peeled and sliced thinly with a mandolin

Pickle liquid

For the pickle liquid (Makes about 1 litre)

600ml white wine vinegar

400ml caster sugar

300ml white wine

For the roasted carrots:

2 bunches of carrots (about 16 carrots), green tops discarded

6 thyme sprigs

6 rosemary sprigs

2 bay leaves

3 garlic cloves, crushed

3tbsp runny honey or agave syrup

3tbsp rapeseed oil

Juice of 1 orange

2 peaches, destoned and sliced, to serve

100g crème fraîche, to serve



Fennel fronds, torn, to garnish

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

METHOD

1 Make the pumpkin seeds. Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/Gas Mark 4. Scatter the pumpkin seeds over a baking tray and scatter over the spices. Give it all a shake to combine. Place the tray in the oven and roast the seeds for 10-15 minutes, until they are lightly coloured and nicely toasted. Leave to cool, then transfer to a food processor and blitz to a crumb. Set aside.

2 Make the pickled carrot. Place the pickling ingredients in a saucepan with 300ml of

water. Whisk them together and place them over a medium heat. Bring to the boil, then immediately remove from the heat. Leave the liquid to cool, transfer it to an airtight container and keep refrigerated until you're ready to use. Place the thinly sliced carrot in a bowl and pour over enough pickle liquid to cover. Set aside.

3 Increase the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/Gas Mark 6.

4 Make the roasted carrots. We don't peel our carrots, as we feel the softer skin of the variety we use adds to the texture of the dish, but you can peel yours if you prefer. Place the carrots in a baking tray and scatter over the herbs and garlic, and drizzle over the honey or agave and the rapeseed oil. Season well and toss everything together in the tray. Place the tray in the oven and roast the carrots for 15-20 minutes, then add the orange juice to the tray and roast for two more minutes, or until the carrots are tender but retain a good bite (the exact cooking time will depend on the size of the carrots).

5 Chop the roasted carrots into random sizes and divide them equally among four plates. Scatter over the pumpkin-seed crumb, then drizzle over any roasting juices. Add the peach slices and the pickled carrot. Finish with a nice spoonful of crème fraîche and garnish with the fennel fronds.