

RECIPES by Amanda Cross

These delicious recipes have been prepared especially for the Vitabiotics Osteocare Plus Bone Challenge by Amanda Cross. Each recipe features specific ingredients to provide nutrients such as calcium, magnesium, zinc, and omega-3 for healthy bones.

A message from Amanda...

"I have developed these recipes so that they are simple to make and follow. The recipes utilise high quality ingredients that are rich in calcium to provide tasty, bone building meals. In addition to eating recipes such as these it is also a good idea to take a supplement such as Osteocare Plus to ensure you are receiving the recommended daily amount of calcium. I hope you enjoy cooking and eating them as much as I do."

1. Bircher Muesli with apple and seasonal fruits serves 4

200g rolled oats

350ml apple juice

2 tbsps dried fruits – cranberries, sultanas, apricots, chopped prunes

1 apple

1 tbsp each pumpkin seeds and sunflower seeds

125g natural bio-yoghurt

Seasonal fresh fruit (such as berries, bananas, peaches and apricots), to decorate

Runny honey, to drizzle - optional

Handful of toasted almonds, to serve, or why not try chopped pistachios or hazelnuts?

Method

Slow energy-releasing oats packed with a whole host of other highly nutritious ingredients in this Bircher muesli recipe is a great way to start the day. I like to soak my oats in the fridge overnight along with the dried fruits which will plump up beautifully and last for up to three days. Then the next morning add your fresh fruit, nuts, seeds and yoghurt for added flavour and texture.

This a very basic recipe, but you can use your imagination and whatever is to hand to create colourful and healthy muesli.

- Place the oats in a bowl with the dried fruit and cover with the apple juice. Cover the bowl with cling film and chill overnight in the fridge.
- To serve, coarsely grate the apple and stir into the oats along with the seeds. Stir in enough yoghurt to reach a desired consistency and top with seasonal berries ...or sliced banana, or chopped peach...or chunks of kiwi.
- Add a dollop of yoghurt, a sprinkle of chopped nuts, a drizzle of honey and dig in.

TOP TIP: If you haven't got apple juice, substitute with rice milk or almond milk which you can make by whizzing almonds in the blender with water and straining the resulting liquid into a jug.



2. 'Everything-in-it' smoothie serves 2

1 tbsp linseeds, ground
400ml skimmed milk or almond milk
1 medium banana, roughly chopped
Half a mango or papaya, roughly chopped
3 heaped tbsp natural bio yoghurt
100g organic jumbo oats
1 heaped tbsp of activated barley powder
1 tbsp wheat grass
Juice of half lemon to taste

Method

- Put the chopped fruit, milk, oats and ground linseeds into a blender and blend well, ensuring fruit is puréed and oats are ground to a smooth texture. Add wheat grass and barley powder, yoghurt and lemon juice and blend well again.
- If you prefer a thinner consistency smoothie then simply add a little water.
- You can vary your fruit by exchanging the mango or papaya for a cup of berries or chopped pineapple.

TOP TIP

Freeze fruits when seasonal and at their best. Spread chopped fruit or berries onto a plastic tray and freeze, then place into portion size bags. This will prevent the fruit from clumping together into a large brick.



3. Poached Pears with blueberries and stem ginger serves 4

4 dessert pears

450 ml (15fl oz) apple juice

150g (5 ½ oz) blueberries (fresh or frozen)

1 piece stem ginger in syrup, very finely chopped

15ml/1tbsp stem ginger syrup

Nutmeg and cinnamon to taste

Greek-style yoghurt, toasted almonds and sunflower seeds to serve

Method

- Peel the pears, cut each one into quarters and remove the core.
- Put the pears in a large saucepan. Pour over the apple juice and bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 7–10 minutes or until the pears are almost tender. Add the blueberries, stem ginger and stem ginger syrup, and cook for a further 2 minutes or until the juices run and the pears take on the rich purple colour of the blueberries.
- With a draining spoon, lift the pears and blueberries out onto a serving dish or individual serving plates. Raise the heat under the saucepan and boil to reduce the fruit juice to about 175 ml (6 fl oz), this will intensify the flavour. Pour over the fruit.
- The usual rule of thumb for poaching fruit is equal parts liquid to sugar – a big ‘no no’, so use fruit juice and add extra sweetness with a little chopped dried fruit or honey.
- When poaching rhubarb, put in a ziplock bag along with a sweet fruit like strawberries or apricots and a little fruit juice. Simmer in a pan of water until softened – this will ensure that the rhubarb stays whole.

TOP TIP

Poached fruit master class! Poached fruit will last for a few days in the fridge and can also be frozen, so if you have a glut of fruit, poach it.



4. Moroccan lamb tagine with pomegranate and mint

COUSCOUS serves 6

For the lamb tagine:

2 tbs olive oil
4 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
2 onions, peeled and chopped
2 tsp grated, fresh ginger
1 tbs coriander seeds, crushed
1 ½ tsp ground cinnamon
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1.5 kg/3 ½ lb shoulder of lamb, boned, fat removed and cut into 4cm/1½in cubes
1 tbs tomato purée
1kg/2 ¼ lb ripe tomatoes or 2 X 400g/14oz can tomatoes, coarsely chopped
400g canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed
75g dried apricots, roughly chopped
2 tbs honey

Method

- Preheat the oven to 160C/325F/Gas 2.
- For the lamb tagine, heat a large ovenproof casserole or heavy saucepan on a medium to high heat.
- Add the olive oil, garlic, onions, ginger and spices and season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper.
- Stir, then cook, covered, on a low heat for about ten minutes, until the onions are soft.
- Add the lamb, tomato purée, chopped tomatoes and honey into the saucepan, stir thoroughly.
- Bring to the simmer and place in the oven for 1½ hours, until the lamb is tender.
- 30 minutes before the end of cooking, remove the lid of the saucepan, add the chickpeas and apricots and let the liquid reduce and thicken.
- If the sauce is still a bit thin, put the saucepan on the hob on a medium heat and without the lid.
- Stir occasionally and let the liquid reduce until a thick sauce begins to appear.

For the couscous:

- Cut the pomegranate in half and scoop out the seeds using a teaspoon and remove the white membrane around the seeds.
- Place the couscous in a bowl and mix in the olive oil and lemon juice.
- Pour the boiling stock or water onto the couscous and season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper.
- Allow the couscous to sit in a warm place for 5-10 minutes until the liquid has been absorbed.
- Stir the chopped herbs and pomegranate seeds into the couscous.
- To serve, place the tagine on serving plates with couscous and a wedge of lime. Serve alongside a bowl of thick Greek yoghurt.
- If you want a vegetable tagine, replace the lamb with 6-8 sliced Portobello mushrooms, 3 large sliced carrots and 1 large cubed aubergine.

For the couscous:

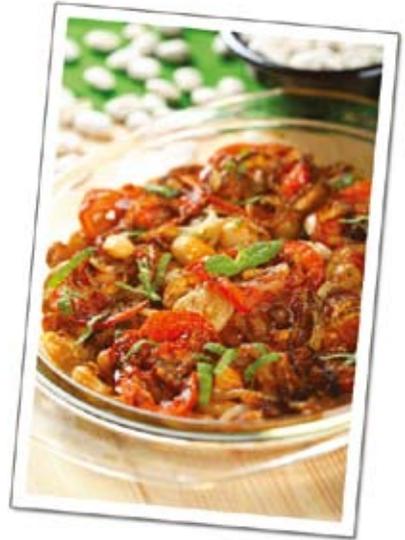
1 small pomegranate
400g couscous
3 tbs olive oil
1 lemon, juice only
½ litre/ ¾ pints boiling chicken stock or water
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 tbs chopped, fresh mint or coriander
To serve
1 lime, cut into wedges
Bowl of Greek yoghurt



5. Mixed bean casserole with tomato, pumpkin and tarragon, barley couscous serves 6-8

This hearty dish is a real winter warmer and is better made the day before. It is perfect for freezing so save time and energy by making large batches and freezing in single or double portion sizes.

- 1 x 400g tin each of adzuki, flageolot, haricot, Cannellini and borlotti beans
- 1 tin plum tomatoes
- 3 tbsp tomato puree
- 4-6 segments fresh garlic (chopped)
- 1 small pumpkin, peeled and diced into 1 inch cubes
- 1 whole onion (diced)
- 3-4 celery sticks (chopped)
- 3-4 carrots (chopped)
- 2 tsp Marigold vegetable bouillon
- 2-3 tbsp veg oil or olive oil
- 2-3 bay leaves
- Small handful fresh tarragon, finely chopped



Method

- Heat the oil in a large heavy based pan and add the chopped garlic and chopped onion.
- Cook gently until it softens and turns pale gold.
- Add tomatoes and tomato puree and cook for 5 minutes.
- Add vegetable bouillon.
- Drain all the tins of beans in a sieve and rinse with water.
- Add the beans and chopped pumpkin to the pot.
- Add your bay leaves and bring to the boil, then lower the heat, put on a lid and simmer for one hour.
- Remove from the heat, season with salt and pepper and add the chopped tarragon.
- Either serve immediately, or ideally serve the next day with either barley couscous or quinoa, and garnished with a little extra tarragon.



TOP TIP

By adding extra vegetable stock to the finished dish you can turn it into a satisfying bean soup.

6. Salmon or tofu and coconut milk curry with lemon grass and basil serves 2

This is simple to make, delicious, healthy and perfect for dinner parties. Its delicate flavours also work well with white fish such as cod or halibut.

Either 2 fillets of fresh salmon, or 500-600 grams firm tofu, chopped into chunks

1 x 400g can coconut milk

1 stick lemon grass, outer layer removed and roughly chopped

1 tsp mild curry powder

Pinch of turmeric

½ inch cube ginger, or more to taste, roughly chopped

1 large clove garlic, roughly chopped

1 tbspn onion, roughly chopped

Thai fish sauce

200g sugar snap peas or mange-tout, roughly sliced

2 spring onions, trimmed and cut diagonally into ½ inch pieces

Juice of ½ lime

Finely chopped red chilli

Small handful fresh basil, roughly chopped

Method

- Gently sauté the onion, garlic, ginger and lemon grass in the vegetable oil until softened.
- Cool the mixture and spoon it into a blender.
- Add the coconut milk, curry powder, turmeric, splash of fish sauce and blend until mixed well.
- Pour into a saucepan and cook on a low heat constantly stirring until boiling, turn down and simmer for about ten minutes.
- If you want a more liquid consistency, you can add a splash of water.
- Add the peas and spring onions and cook for a further 2 minutes.
- Add the salmon or tofu and cook for about 3-4 minutes or until the salmon is cooked through.
- Add the lime juice to taste, sprinkle with the chillies and basil and serve immediately with brown rice.



7. Quick seafood risotto serves 2-4

1 onion, finely chopped
1 head fennel, finely chopped
½ tsp fennel seeds
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 tbsp vegetable oil
300g brown rice
500ml fish or vegetable stock
300g of mixed seafood (can be frozen)
100g frozen peas
1 lemon, juiced
Handful parsley, finely chopped
Salt and pepper to taste

Method

- Cook the rice according to the instructions on the packet in the stock until just cooked – approximately 25 – 30 minutes.
- Meanwhile, heat the oil in a heavy based pan and add the onion, fennel, fennel seeds and garlic, cook gently until softened and transparent.
- Remove from the heat until the rice is cooked.
- Drain the rice, cover and set aside.
- Place the pan back on the heat, and add the peas and seafood, gently heat through for 2-3 minutes.
- Add the hot rice, lemon juice, parsley and season to taste with the salt and pepper.
- Serve immediately with a large green salad.



8. Baked tuna with spring onions, cherry tomatoes and fennel and saffron potatoes serves 4

4 x 7oz fresh tuna steaks
4 garlic cloves - chopped
3 tbsp chopped mint
3 tbsp chopped parsley
2 tbsp chopped capers drained and soaked in water for 10 minutes
Juice and grated rind of 2 lemons
1 tsp oregano
4 small potatoes, peeled and sliced very finely
500g cherry tomatoes
1 bunch spring onions, finely chopped
1 head fennel, finely chopped
1 small packet saffron – approx ¼ teaspoon
½ pint chicken stock
Extra virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly milled black pepper



Method

- Preheat the oven to 220 degrees Centigrade/425 degrees Fahrenheit/gas mark 7.
- Put the chopped garlic in a food processor and add the mint, parsley, capers, lemon juice and rind, oregano and enough olive oil to make an almost liquid mixture.
- Whizz to make a thick sauce then season with salt and pepper.
- Season the tuna steaks and cover with the herb paste.
- Heat about 1 tablespoon olive oil in a heavy based pan, add the onion, fennel and potato and soften. Dissolve the saffron in the chicken stock and add to the pan and bring to the boil.
- Reduce the heat and cook for about 5-10 minutes until most of the liquid has gone and the potatoes are just cooked through.
- Transfer the potato mixture to a lightly oiled deep baking tray and place the tuna fillets on top.
- Place in the oven and bake for 7-8 minutes, until the tuna is cooked through.

9. Baked red peppers with a spicy wild rice, pine nut and courgette stuffing serves 2-4

- 4 red peppers
- 340ml (12floz) vegetable stock
- 115ml (4floz) olive oil
- 110g (4oz) wild rice
- 50g (2oz) courgette, chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic chopped
- 110g (4oz) spinach
- 50g (2oz) peas
- 2 tbsp tomato puree
- 2 tsp harissa paste
- 50 g/ 2oz pinenuts
- Salt and pepper, to taste



Method

- Pre-heat oven to 200°C: 400°F: Gas 6.
- Slice the tops from the red peppers and remove the seeds and inner membranes.
- Heat the oil and gently fry the green pepper, onion, courgettes and garlic for 3-4 minutes, do not allow to brown.
- Add the rice and stir well.
- Add the stock, tomato paste and harrissa paste and bring to the boil.
- Cover, and cook for 30-40 minutes or until the rice is cooked yet still firm and has absorbed all the liquid.
- If the mixture begins to dry add extra liquid.
- Stir in the spinach and peas to the hot mixture, cover and leave for 2-3 minutes until the spinach has wilted.
- Season the mixture to taste and add the pine nuts.
- Stuff the red peppers and place them upright, in a shallow oiled oven-proof dish.
- Add vegetable stock to half-way up the peppers, cover with foil or greaseproof paper.
- Bake for about 35 minutes.
- Serve hot or cold with a green salad or portion of green vegetables.

10. Baked sea bass with lemon and herbs serves 4

Many people are nervous about cooking whole fish but it really is quite simple, and if cooked properly the resultant fish is beautifully moist and full of flavour. Here I have suggested bass but really the same rules apply to most whole fish such as bream or trout.

Olive oil, for greasing and drizzling

4 small whole sea bass, each about 300g once gutted, cleaned and head and tail removed, or 2 larger ones, each about 450-500g once prepared as above (ask your fishmonger to do this for you)

2 lemons, thinly sliced

25g bunch of fresh dill

25g bunch of fresh flat leaf parsley

6 fresh thyme sprigs

4 bay leaves

300ml white wine

Method

- Preheat the oven to 200°C/fan180°C/gas 6.
- Smear the base of 1-2 large roasting tin/s with a little olive oil. Season the inside of each sea bass, then place them in the roasting tin/s.
- Fill the cavity of each fish with the lemon slices, then tuck in the dill, parsley, thyme and bay leaves.
- Scatter over any remaining lemon and herbs, then pour over the wine.
- Drizzle each fish with a little olive oil and season well.
- Cover the whole tin/s tightly with foil and bake for 25-35 minutes, basting the fish with the pan juices halfway, depending on the size of the fish – you want the fish to feel firm to the touch, with the meat opaque and moist.
- Carefully transfer the fish to a board and cover loosely with foil to keep hot.
- Make a quick sauce from the pan juices.
- Place the tin over the hob (if using 2 tins, tip the juices into 1 tin) and boil for a few minutes, until the juices are reduced slightly and well-flavoured. Strain into a jug.
- Transfer the fish to warmed serving plates, easing out the lemon and herbs slightly so they fall on the plate. (If you've cooked 2 large fish, you need to cut each fish into 2 fillets, which takes no time. Use a sharp knife to cut down the back bone, then lift away the fillet and transfer to a plate, skin-side up. Discard the backbone, then transfer the other fillet to a second serving plate. Divide the fennel, lemon and herbs between them. Repeat with the remaining fish).
- To serve, pour a little of the sauce over each sea bass, then drizzle with some extra oil.
- Serve with new potatoes and green beans.



11. Spicy turkey and vegetable brochettes with lime and cucumber raita serves 6

Marinade:

1 small carton natural pro-biotic yoghurt

2 tablespoons each of: olive oil, Madras curry powder, grated cucumber

1 tablespoon minced garlic

2 lbs skinless, boneless turkey cut into 2 inch cubes

3 large red peppers, de-seeded and cut into 2 inch pieces

36 small button mushrooms

12 skewers

Raita:

2 small cartons natural probiotic yoghurt

1 small cucumber, peeled, de-seeded and finely diced

juice 1/2 lime

2 tsp Madras curry powder

2 small cloves garlic, minced

Handful fresh mint, finely chopped, or coriander if preferable.

Method

- Combine marinade ingredients and add the turkey.
- Refrigerate overnight.
- About 2-3 hours before serving combine all the raita ingredients and chill in the refrigerator
- Thread 3 pieces of turkey, 3 pieces of red pepper and 3 mushrooms onto each skewer and grill either under a moderate grill or medium heat barbeque for approx 4 minutes per side until turkey is cooked through.
- Serve 2 skewers per person with raita, rice and a large mixed salad.

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR HANDY COOKING TIPS



More Cooking Tips

If you really want to be efficient and minimise preparation time, have an occasional blitz and freeze your onions, garlic and ginger. Freezing changes texture, so once frozen only use for cooking.

- Chop and place onions on a plastic tray in the freezer. When frozen, remove and place in freezer containers or bags, and seal. This allows you to remove the amount you want, when you want.
- Ginger and garlic can be peeled and stored in freezer bags whole or processed with a little water in a blender and put into ice cube trays.
- Also you can store your onions for up to six months without freezing by wrapping your onions separately in paper towels and storing in your refrigerator.
- Nuts and seeds are full of health enhancing oils which can easily spoil if stored badly. Improve the shelf life of nuts and seeds by refrigerating them.
- Potato ricers aren't just for potatoes, use with cooked pumpkin, squash and celeriac for a healthy alternative to mashed potato.
- Steam fry rather than stir fry – using a piece of paper kitchen towel, lightly grease the inside of either a wok or frying pan. Heat until very hot then add chopped vegetables, meat or fish. Toss for a couple of seconds and then keep adding small splashes of either water or stock. This will cause puffs of steam which will cook the food gently and healthily.

Make your own spice and herb mixes:

Five Spice Powder

- 1 tsp Ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp Ground cloves
- 1 tsp Fennel seed
- 1 tsp Star anise
- 1 tsp Szechwan peppercorns

Italian Herb Seasoning

- 1 tsp Oregano
- 1 tsp Marjoram
- 1 tsp Thyme
- 1 tsp Basil
- 1 tsp Rosemary
- 1 tsp Sage

If you are making brochettes or kebabs there are several 'skewer' tips you ought to bear in mind:

- Soak wooden skewers in water for 30 minutes before using them so they won't burn during cooking.
- If you prefer metal skewers, which have a long life, use square or twisted types, which will hold the food better than round ones.
- To keep food from slipping off during cooking and turning, use two parallel skewers rather than a single skewer.
- If you're using a wooden skewer, as you thread the food move the pieces close together, with no space showing. If the skewer is metal, you can leave small spaces between the pieces.