

Home truths

THIS MONTH IN WHAT REALLY GOES ON INSIDE A HOME, WE GATHER THE HUNGRY AND THE HUNGOVER FOR **BRUNCH**

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THE BOOM in restaurants serving brunch is unstoppable* and, while the joys of going out for this most leisurely meal are not to be sniffed at, hosting brunch at home is even better and costs a great deal less. Not only do you handpick your guests (no rowdy people or ill-behaved kids on neighbouring tables), but you can collapse on the sofa with the papers afterwards.

Brunch feels very modern but the term was first coined in an 1895 feature in British magazine *Hunter's Weekly*, which described the meal as “cheerful, sociable...

it sweeps away the worries and cobwebs of the week.” All of which is as true today.

The great advantage of this hybrid meal is that it is easy to assemble and doesn't involve fancy cooking, table-laying and general showing-off like a dinner party might. It's an easy-like-Sunday-morning affair, laden with everyone's favourite carbs (Bagels! Toast! Waffles! Muffins!), eggs cooked in various ways and lashings of juice and Bloody Marys. It's unhurried, unpretentious and the antidote to weekend hangovers. The king of meals. We love it.

CONDIMENTS OF THE SEASON

A fine selection of colourful bottles offering a variety of seasonings is a necessity at brunch. Your guests can then spend a pleasurable few moments customising their food with sauces and pickles. Consider yourself a B&B proprietor for the day and lay the HP sauce and maple syrup before them. A couple of bowls filled with gherkins and/or chopped capers will bring a New York vibe to the table, and no dish involving bacon is complete without tomato ketchup. Don't forget the salt and pepper – either fully charged grinders or cute little pinch pots – and a slab of butter for the toast.

Serving suggestions

Tabasco sauce (for extra-hot Bloody Marys); honey; Marmite; tomato ketchup; HP sauce; English mustard; gherkins; capers; marmalade; cream cheese; maple syrup (for pancakes and waffles); mayonnaise.



WHICH JUICER?

A jug of freshly squeezed orange juice on the table sets the mood for a sociable brunch. Sharp (especially when blended with grapefruit), colourful and fresh, it is a vitamin-packed, sun-drenched livener. Just the thing to quaff pre-bagels and bloody Marys. There are several ways of delivering juice depending on your choice of fruit or veg, from a simple squeeze to a full-on blitz.

1. LINDEN OLIVE WOOD LEMON REAMER, £15

Made from sustainable olive wood so it's a lovely thing to hold in your hand. Best for squeezing lemons but would work with oranges, too, with a bit of application.
habitat.co.uk

2. NUTRIBULLET 1000 SERIES JUICER BLENDER, £99

The machine that rebooted the whole juicing thing is still the best for pummeling fruit and veg into a nutritious mush.
johnlewis.com

3. RUSSELL HOBBS 3-IN-1 JUICER, £99.95

Three different ways of blitzing fruit: a press, a blender and a juicer. Also good for soup and smoothies.
johnlewis.com

4. PHILIPS DAILY COLLECTION CITRUS PRESS, £18

Simple to use and all you need to squeeze citrus fruit. Simply press half a fruit to activate, then collect up to 500ml of juice.
amaroni.com



HALF A DOZEN TASTY BRUNCH DISHES

• **Eggs Benedict** Who can resist the uniquely delicious combination of hollandaise, poached eggs, ham and a warm muffin? No one, that's who.

• **Shakshuka** A delicious way to poach eggs – in a spicy, tomatoey sauce straight out of the pan.

• **Huevos rancheros** We have Mexico to thank for this way of serving eggs – fried on a tortilla with plenty of chilli-tomato sauce, refried beans and guacamole.

• **Waffles** Top with ripe bananas and Greek yogurt, drizzle liberally with maple syrup and prepare to enter brunch heaven.

• **Hash browns** The essential brunch side dish: grated potatoes fried in butter until a golden crust forms.

• **Avocado toast** A true modern-day staple but always a crowd-pleaser, especially when sourdough, a pinch of chilli flakes and a squeeze of lime are involved.



THE BEAUTY OF A BAGEL

If ever there was food that defined brunch, the bagel is it. This ring of yeasted dough with its crisp exterior and chewy interior is a practical yet moreish platform for all manner of tasty things. The classic New York topping is lox (smoked salmon), cream cheese, tomato and red onion, but don't let this restrict you – peanut butter, scrambled eggs, banana and honey, mashed avocado – the list is endless.

Although they originated in the Jewish communities of Poland, bagels became popular in North America in the early 1900s, when the International Beigel Bakers Union was founded. Until automated bagels were introduced (1958), bagel making was considered a skilled trade and took four specialist bakers to make: two to roll, one to boil, and one to bake. Nowadays, bagel making is open to all and there are gadgets, such as Lakeland's silicone bagel moulds (six for £17.99), to help.

HOW TO BRUNCH

As this is the most laidback meal there is, there are no rules. But a few pointers might help make yours even more chilled, so here you go:

- Don't even think of doing anything else: brunch is long and leisurely and will easily expand to fill the entire day.
- Ask your guests to bring something: extra pastries, smoked salmon, juice and coffee will always be demolished.
- Have a few post-brunch activities up your sleeve. A gentle stroll around your neighbourhood or a rowdy karaoke session are good options.
- Hold your brunch late-morning on a Sunday to give you time to prepare and the hangover, time for a lie-in.
- Have a pile of Sunday papers for those who aren't feeling chatty.
- Start a brunch club and take it in turns to host. Although this could add a certain competitive element...

*The UK eats
320 million
bagels a year*



A BLOODY MARY? DON'T MIND IF I DO...

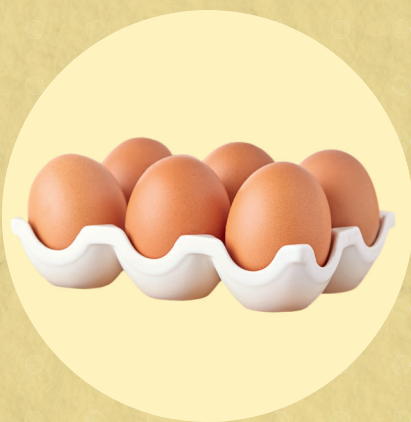
Masquerading as food rather than an alcoholic drink, the Bloody Mary has the incredible ability to perk you up rather than make you woozy. The amount of tomato juice required is also bound to do you good, or create the illusion that it might. Halfway between a cocktail and a snack, it is the ideal accompaniment to the combination of sweet and savoury that brunch delivers.

What ingredients to include is open to debate but the consensus seems to be that the following are essential: tomato juice, vodka (not gin, that would be a Red Snapper), Worcestershire sauce, Tabasco. Add a little lemon zest and a celery stick to stir it with and you're all set.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY; STOCKFOOD; STOCKSY

EXTRA SOMETHINGS

Make your brunch table even more delectable with these lovelies...



Ceramic egg rack, £10
tch.net



Granite salt pinch pot, £11.99 for two
lakeland.co.uk



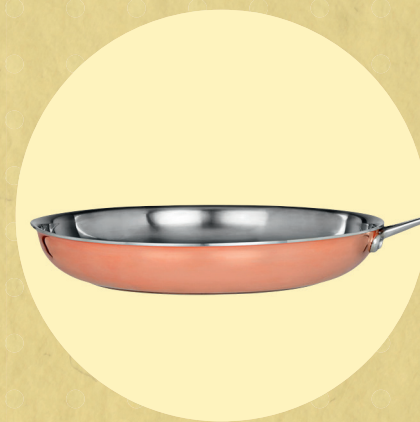
Marble and mango wood board, £26.95
decoratorsnotebook.co.uk



Krups coffee grinder, £25
johnlewis.com



Tea ball infuser, £8.50
miafleur.com



Copper frying pan, £65
johnlewis.com



Mini Moderns enamel butter dish, £19.95
hurnandhurn.com



Elzora chalk white mug, £7
habitat.co.uk



Nutri Snack waffle stick maker, £19.99
lakeland.co.uk