

food for thought

with Benjamin James

Our resident foodie Benjamin James of the **George & Dragon** in Chipstead reveals what's been keeping the pub busy this month and shares his favourite recipes



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Freshly made apple soda bread.. wonderful with Winterdale Shaw cheese!

Cocktail of the month: Ginger Pimm's

No other drink screams "British summer" than the classic Pimm's. This month at the George & Dragon, Chipstead we have a slight variation on the classic. Made with a little extra gin and ginger ale, it is a grown-up's definitive summer must.

- 25ml Pimm's
- 12.4ml Gin
- 125ml ginger ale
- 1 strawberry
- A few orange pieces
- A few mint leaves
- A few cucumber halves
- A couple of apple slices

Method:

Simply stir all the ingredients together over ice and serve.



Soda Bread Recipe

- 500g bread flour
- 400ml natural yogurt (460g approx)
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 2 apples grated on wide setting
(ideally red for a great colour pattern)

Method

Place all ingredients into a bowl and gently combine together. As soon as it is combined, it is done. Do not overwork the dough – the secret to a good soda bread is a quick and simple mix.

Portion and shape the bread on a flour surface. This recipe will give you six good-sized rolls.

Place on a floured tray in a hot oven (200°C) for around 25 minutes. Keep checking the bread and when it appears golden-brown on top, turn it over and tap the bottom. It is ready when you get a light hollow sound. Enjoy!

For me, an English summer is certainly one of the greatest wonders in the world. Looking at the Kent countryside, with its sprawling fields and rivers, I'm reminded of a fun childhood spent in the sunshine and the memories never fail to bring me back to earth after a stressful day. Here at the George & Dragon, Chipstead our children's play area is filled with excited shouts while parents keep a watchful eye and enjoy a relaxing drink in our alfresco kitchen garden. Children seem to be delighted when a member of the team pick something straight from the vegetable beds and let them eat it.

This month, with the Chipstead village fete and Olympic-related get-togethers filling the calendar, it is a great time to eat outside either in a pub garden like ours at the George & Dragon or a lovely picnic in the countryside. When friends and family visit us from the north, my wife and I take great pride in making a picnic using only local produce. A cheese from Winterdale Shaw, strawberries from Stonepitts Farm, local wine from Bidender, salad from Watts Farm and even a nice bottle of beer from Westerham Brewery all have pride of place in the hamper. Along with the fresh yeast-risen bread we make every day, we often have great fun making simple flavoured soda breads to accompany our ploughmans at the George & Dragon. They also work wonderfully with the cheese in your hamper!

Soda bread is easy and satisfying to make at home. You can go from measuring out the flour to taking the finished loaf out of the oven in less than 30 minutes. It's the best bread to try and make at home, take on a picnic or just enjoy daily.

We are firm favourites of local brewers Westerham, so were thrilled to hear they have just launched their first new permanent beer in four years. Proudly named the Spirit of Kent, it has been launched in partnership with the owners of the Kent Spitfire. The Spirit of Kent XXXX pale ale is a deep golden ale with citrus notes and tropical fruit flavours on the palate. Befitting a Mark IX Spitfire, the beer is hopped with nine Kent bred and grown hops. We are proud to have it on pump at the George and Dragon so pop down and try a pint this month. It goes down beautifully with our Winterdale Shaw ploughmans and apple soda bread.

■ Visit the pub at 39 High Street, Chipstead, TN13 2RW and for more information or to book, call 01732 779019 or visit www.georgeanddragonchipstead.com