

# The things I make ahead of the big day (and how I make them).

**Cranberry sauce (sweet and sour and boozy)**

**Bread sauce (A thing of savoury joy. Please try this if you haven't before)**

**Stuffing (made particularly good using sourdough breadcrumbs)**

---

**Cranberry sauce (makes 500ml)**

**Can be made 5 days in advance**

500g cranberries (frozen or fresh)

200g sugar

1 large orange

200ml port

Put your cranberries in a pan along with the sugar on a lowish heat. You want to get the cranberries slowly cooking, releasing their juices, so the sugar has something to dissolve into.

While this is happening, grate the zest of your orange (I use a fine Microplane grater). Once you've done this, juice the orange as well. Once the cranberries have burst and the sugar dissolved, add the orange juice, zest and port and simmer gently until you have a thick and glossy sauce. The berries should still have a bit of body to them so don't feel the need to simmer this until it's thick. It will thicken as it cools.

Once this is cool, cover with plastic wrap and keep in fridge until serving day.

**Bread sauce (makes 500ml)**  
**Can be made 3 days in advance**

1 large onion  
10 cloves  
10 peppercorns  
500ml full fat milk  
2 bay leaves  
A generous pinch of nutmeg  
80g butter  
150g fresh white breadcrumbs  
50 ml heavy cream  
Salt and pepper

The exceptionally British and quaint way of starting this sauce is to give your onion a dose of acupuncture with the cloves. By which I hopefully obviously mean, stud the whole onion with your cloves. This is then left in the milk to infuse.

I prefer roughly chopping the onion and simply adding it with the cloves, bay leaves, and peppercorns straight into the milk. I then bring the milk to scalding temperature, take it off the heat and cover it with a lid before leaving it to infuse for an hour.

I then sieve this into a clean pan and add my breadcrumbs and cream. I put this on a low heat until it starts to thicken. But, because I'm making this a few days ahead, I don't keep it on the heat to thicken too much. Instead, at this point I cube the butter and dot it over the surface, so it melts all over the top. I then let the sauce cool with the butter set on top before putting (covered) in the fridge.

When I'm ready to serve on Christmas Day, I reheat the sauce, stir through the butter, and check the consistency. If it's too thick I'll add another splash of cream.

Season with plenty of salt and pepper, and serve warm.

## **Sourdough stuffing**

**Can be made 3 days in advance**

100 g soft butter  
3 large onions, peeled and finely chopped  
3 tbsp fresh sage, finely chopped  
400 g fresh sourdough breadcrumbs  
2 large eggs

Soften your chopped onions in a pan with all the butter. Do this slowly for 20 minutes or even longer so they don't colour too much. When they are soft and starting to caramelize, add the sage and gently fry until your kitchen smells like an English country garden. Then add your sourdough breadcrumbs and stir until everything is well mixed.

Tip this into a container, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate. On the day you're serving this, beat your two eggs and then mix it with your breadcrumbs. Doing this now makes it keep much longer at the previous stage.

Either fill a baking tray with this or roll into balls. Bake at 200°C covered in foil for around 30-40 mins, potentially longer if baking in a deep baking tray. Remove the foil for the final 10 minutes to brown nicely on top.