

MUM'S POST-CHRISTMAS HAM CAKES



Makes 10

Ingredients

- 750g floury potatoes (like Maris Pipers or King Edwards), peeled and cut into 2cm chunks or 650g leftover boiled potatoes
- 200g ham, chopped or flaked (or however much you've got leftover)
- 25g parsley leaves, finely chopped
- 1 bunch of scallions, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp capers, drained and roughly chopped
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 heaped tbsp of plain flour
- Sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

For coating and frying

- 100g plain (all-purpose) flour
- 200g fresh, dried or panko breadcrumbs
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 3-4 tbsp vegetable oil
- 25g salted butter

These ham cakes are one of the best ways to use leftover ingredients up after Christmas. We often use leftover mashed potato, chopped up sprouts, leeks and any herbs we have left lying around. You can change out the ham for turkey, salmon or make them vegetarian if you want. They're not unlike a potato cake or a fish cake, but these ham cakes have an added breadcrumb coating – it's worth it I promise. If you have the time, I strongly recommend adding about 200g of bechamel sauce to the mix to make them really creamy (like you would a croquette). Then with any leftover bechamel sauce, stir in a generous handful of parsley and serve it with the ham cake.

Method

1. Cooking the potatoes from scratch: Put the floury potatoes into a saucepan with enough water to cover them and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Bring the potatoes to a boil and cook them for 12–15 minutes until soft, then drain and set aside to steam dry and cool in the colander for at least 5 minutes. The potatoes need to be very dry for this recipe, so let them steam for as long as you can.

2. Once cooled and dried, crush up the potatoes in a large bowl. Don't mash them completely – you want it to be like a very lumpy mash. Mix in the ham, parsley, spring onions, capers, mustard and eggs along with a generous pinch of salt and pepper. Stir it all together carefully, making sure it's evenly combined but not totally mashed together. Each mix will differ depending on your potatoes and what you're adding. You want them to be able to stick together firmly so add a little extra flour or egg if needed.

3. Form the mixture into tennis-ball sized patties (about 120g each) and place onto a baking sheet or large plate. Refrigerate to set for a minimum of 1 hour.

See below to find out how to coat and fry the ham cakes...

For coating and drying:

- 1.** Put the flour into a bowl, seasoning with a pinch of salt and pepper. Put the breadcrumbs into another bowl and put the beaten eggs into a third bowl. Set up an empty baking tray at the end, ready to put the ham cakes onto once breaded.
- 2.** Dip your moulded ham cakes into the flour, making sure it covers every side, then dip them into the beaten eggs, again making sure the egg coats all the surfaces, then finally into the breadcrumbs. You can freeze or refridgerate some at this stage, then just fry however many you want to eat.
- 3.** Heat the oil and butter in a large frying pan over a medium-high heat, then add a few ham cakes at a time, sealing off the edges first by rolling them in the butter and oil until lightly golden. Take care as they will be quite fragile. Turn over and fry for 3-4 minutes on each side until completely golden all over.
- 4.** My family loves to eat the ham cakes with parsley sauce, but they are equally good with just a salad or some seasonal greens on the side.