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by Liz Robb

Crab Croquettes with Red Pepper Sauce

Ingredients

600g potatoes
35g butter
A splash of milk
2 slices of day old wholemeal bread
A large bunch of spring onions
3 cloves of garlic
80g dry crumbly cheese eg. Wensleydale
175g mixed crabmeat
A handful of chives
A small handful of parsley
A teaspoon of Dijon mustard
1 lemon
Salt and freshly milled black pepper
2 eggs
3 heaped tablespoons of plain flour
Extra virgin olive oil
3 red peppers
2 onions
A few sprigs of fresh thyme
400g tomato passata
3-4 tablespoons of crème fraiche

Preparation

1. For the croquettes: Peel the potatoes, chop them into chunks and cook in boiling water for about 15 minutes, until tender. Drain and leave to steam for a few minutes, then add 10g of butter and a splash of milk and mash until completely smooth.
2. Meanwhile, break the bread into small pieces and grind into fine breadcrumbs. Peel and finely chop the spring onions and peel 1 clove of garlic. Chop or crumble the cheese into little pieces.
3. Sauté the spring onions and crushed garlic over a low heat in the remaining 15g of butter for 2-3 minutes, then tip into a large bowl. Add the prepared cheese, 3 tablespoons of the breadcrumbs and the crabmeat and mix together. Finely chop the parsley leaves and chives and add to the bowl, then put in the Dijon mustard and a splash of lemon juice and mix. Finally, season well with salt and black pepper then combine with the cooled mashed potato and mix together thoroughly to make a stiff mixture. Place in the fridge to chill for a while.
4. Sieve 3 tablespoons of plain flour and tip it onto a shallow dish or plate. Beat 2 eggs in a shallow bowl. Tip the remaining breadcrumbs into a third shallow bowl.Take a tablespoon of the crab and potato mixture and, with floured hands, form it into a small cylinder. Gently roll it in the flour, place in the beaten egg and spoon egg over it, then lift it out into the breadcrumbs, sprinkling them on to coat it. Place the finished croquettes on plates, cover with clingfilm and chill in the fridge until needed.
5. For the red pepper sauce: Preheat the oven to 220 degrees or 200 degrees fan oven. Pour 2 tablespoons of olive oil in an oven tray and put in the oven to warm for a few minutes.
6. Deseed the peppers and chop into large pieces. Peel the onions and chop into wedges. Throw them into the hot tray with 2 unpeeled cloves of garlic, scatter in the leaves from a couple of thyme sprigs, mix together and bake for 25-30 minutes.
7. Blend the roasted peppers, onions, peeled garlic and thyme together. Pour the passata into a saucepan, stir in the pepper mixture and heat through.
8. When you are ready to cook and serve, you can either shallow fry the croquettes in batches in oil for 12-15 minutes until golden and crunchy or, for a lower fat version, bake

them. To do this, heat the oven to 200 degrees or 180 fan oven and lightly brush a baking sheet with olive oil. Arrange the croquettes on the tray, spray with a little more oil and then bake for 25-30 minutes, or until piping hot and browned.

9 Warm the sauce through in a saucepan. When hot, turn off the heat, stir in 3-4 tablespoons of crème fraiche and serve immediately.

Cooks Note

These crispy crab croquettes are good to make in quantity as a hot item on the buffet, or to serve as a tasty starter. They are delicious served with a good spoonful of the creamy sauce, made with roasted red pepper, onion, garlic, tomato and thyme.

Makes 25-30 small croquettes.