**By Lorraine Mallinder**

**Calum Franklin**

Calum Franklin calls himself a ‘pastry deviant’. Talk to the London chef for a few minutes and it quickly becomes apparent that his brand of iconoclasm rests not so much on breaking the rules as perfecting them – to the point of obsession.

This, he has done with pie. Pork pie. Cod Pie. Beef Wellington Pie. Be in no doubt, should you ever have the good fortune to visit The Pie Room, his eccentric Victorian kitchen nestling within the Holborn Dining Room, you will be sampling the ultimate in pie.

Franklin’s recipe for success rests on a no-nonsense blend of hard graft and sheer, bloody-minded focus. This is a city boy, who started out the traditional way, scrubbing pots and pans. He was 17, fresh out of school, and immediately knew this was the life for him.

There was something about it, he says. ‘I remember going home and telling my brothers: This is what I want to do.’

He never looked back. It was at the Holborn Dining Room, where he works as head chef, that he discovered pie. Inspiration struck while rummaging around in the basement, where he stumbled upon some antique pie moulds.

‘I realised I didn’t know how to use them, that there was a big gap in our knowledge of traditional techniques,’ he says. ‘Then I thought: First I’m going to teach myself, then I’ll train the team.’

From that moment on, it was pie all the way. Dedicated and methodical, he learned the small, but crucial tricks that make all the difference – like storing your chopping board in the freezer to keep the dough firm while rolling. Pastry making requires discipline, he says. ‘It’s not like you can add salt or lemon later.’

Soon the pies had outgrown the kitchen. Franklin and his team set to work on the ultimate pie-in-the-sky project - a special Victorian kitchen, replete with copper and brass artistry, selling hundreds of pies every day through a hole in the wall – a window on British culinary history.

Franklin has single-handedly revived an archaic style of cooking that was possibly nearing extinction, given the sad decline of the city’s pie and mash shops. ‘Pie has been part of our food culture for 600 or 700 years,’ he says. ‘It’s gone in and out of fashion, moving between royal banquets and the tables of the lowliest peasants.

‘I wanted to make it revered again.’

**Keema-spiced cottage pie**

A favourite in the Franklin household. Serves 4.

**INGREDIENTS**

1 tbsp vegetable oil

1 medium onion, finely diced

½ tsp ground turmeric

2 tsp garam masala

½ tsp cumin seeds

2 garlic cloves, minced

2 tsp grated fresh root ginger

2 red chillies, finely chopped

500g beef mince

350g tinned chopped tomatoes

300g frozen peas, defrosted

25g coriander, leaves picked

**For the potato topping**

1kg peeled potatoes, cut into chunks

150ml milk

80g unsalted butter

1 tsp ground turmeric

1 egg yolk

**Equipment**

24cm round ovenproof pie dish

**METHOD**

Preheat oven to 180°C fan/200°C/gas mark 6.

Heat oil in large frying pan over medium heat. Add onion and sauté for 10 minutes until it starts to brown. Add turmeric, garam masala and cumin seeds - toast for 2 minutes. Add garlic, ginger and chilli - sauté for a further 5 minutes until soft and lightly browned. Add beef mince and sauté until liquid has evaporated. Then add tomatoes and cook for further 15 minutes. Add peas and coriander leaves. Taste and adjust seasoning, if necessary, then spoon into a 24cm round ovenproof pie dish, level the surface and allow to cool.

For potato topping, boil potatoes in pan of salted water for 15-20 minutes (or until soft in centre) and then drain. Add milk, butter and turmeric, then mash together well. Finally, fold in egg yolk and mix well to combine.

Spread potato topping over the minced beef mixture in pie dish. Ruffle surface of potato topping with fork for added texture.

Place dish in preheated oven and bake for 30 minutes or until the beef mixture bubbles up sides of the dish and the potato topping has a crispy golden crust. Serve immediately.

*For more of Calum’s pies, read The Pie Room, which contains 80 very achievable recipes and some equally scrumptious side dishes.*