NIKEL SLEATR'S SIMPLE SUPPERS

Grow your own grub.  bbc.co.uk/digin
Welcome to Dig In, the BBC campaign that makes growing and cooking your own veg easy and fun, however small your outdoor space.

The best bit about home growing is that it’s simple: there’s no need for an allotment, wellies or even a big plot – a yard, balcony or windowsill will do. Dig In is celebrating its second successful harvest. This year we got muddy with carrots, courgettes, French beans, basil and mixed leaves. Now we’re knocking them into shape with a bunch of tasty recipes. Anyone for hand-made pesto with watercress? Yes please!

If you’ve grown and cooked with Dig In before, you know Nigel Slater creates brilliant dishes for us; if it’s your first time, you’re in for a treat.

Here’s Nigel...

“Grub’s up, eat up!”

Time to savour the home-grown flavour.

Get cooking
Our favourite cook, Nigel Slater, has come up trumps again and created five tasty recipes for this year’s Dig In veggies. Watch videos of him in action on the Dig In website. See loads more great recipes on BBC One this autumn with a new series of Nigel Slater’s Simple Suppers.

Keep on growing
If you’ve enjoyed the Dig In experience, perhaps grown your own veg for the first time and are completely hooked, you might like to know there’s loads more on offer for budding gardeners from the BBC.

Online: Take a look at the gardening website. There’s a great basics section and the Gardeners’ calendar will show you what to do and when. bbc.co.uk/gardening

On TV: Gardeners’ World on BBC Two has lots to offer gardeners whatever your experience – from basic techniques, to planning, design and special features. Also keep your eyes peeled for some new programmes on BBC Two.

On radio: Don’t miss Gardeners’ Question Time on Radio 4 every week. For listeners of Radio Scotland there’s Beech Grove, and in Northern Ireland there’s Gardeners’ Corner. Lots of local radio shows have gardening features, so listen out for them too.

Hungry for more?
Had a bumper harvest? Need recipe ideas for all that home grown veg? Check out the BBC Food website for all the recipes from Nigel Slater’s Simple Suppers. Even if you haven’t grown your own, you’re sure to find the perfect dish from the BBC Food website which has more than 12,500 recipes. Search by chef, TV programme, ingredient, season, occasion or cuisine. bbc.co.uk/food

“IT doesn’t matter if you’re an experienced gardener or a novice, the joy and satisfaction of growing your own vegetables never goes away.

It takes a bit of dedication to sow the seeds, battle with the pests, brave the elements and coax your plants into producing a harvest. But it’s all worth it as there’s nothing better than the sense of achievement you get from picking your own veg from your own garden and then preparing it in your own kitchen.

Growing your own is still the best seasoning your food can have.”

Nigel Slater

nigel slater’s simple suppers
Crisp greens in a silky sauce

Serves 4

2 handfuls of French beans
4 handfuls of broad beans in their pods
4 large handfuls of peas
2 large loose handfuls of spinach leaves

For the dressing
½ lemon
2 teaspoons of Dijon mustard
4 tablespoons of olive oil
1 bunch of flat leaf parsley
2 tablespoons of double cream
pinch of salt

Cook the French beans in boiling, salted water for about 5–6 minutes. Drain and cool under running water, then set aside.

Shell the peas and broad beans and cook in deep, lightly salted boiling water – they will only take a few minutes. Drain, toss under cold, running water and set aside.

In a large bowl, toss all the cooked vegetables together with the (thoroughly washed) spinach leaves.

In a separate bowl mix the juice of half a lemon with the mustard. Add a pinch of salt, whisk in the olive oil, stir in the chopped parsley, then whisk in the double cream. Toss the dressing in with the peas, beans and spinach and serve.
Hand-made pesto with watercress

Serves 4

1 handful of pine kernels
3 garlic cloves
1 large handful of fresh basil leaves
1 bunch of watercress leaves
1 handful of grated Parmesan
olive oil
dried pasta, enough for 4
2 large handfuls of rocket leaves
sea salt

I use a pestle and mortar to make the sauce here, but it can also work well enough in a food processor.

The sauce will happily keep in the fridge in a sealed jar for a few days, provided the surface is covered with a layer of olive oil.

Put the pasta on to cook in a deep pan with heavily salted, boiling water. Toast the pine kernels in a frying pan – keep a close eye on them and keep moving them around the pan until they are pale golden brown.

Peel the garlic and crush it using a pestle and mortar, adding a large pinch of sea salt. Add the basil leaves and continue crushing with the pestle.

Strip the watercress leaves from their stems and add to the basil, continuing to crush until you have a bright green purée. Add the toasted pine kernels, crush, then add a handful of grated Parmesan. Slowly mix in enough olive oil to give a good, thickish sauce.

When the pasta is cooked (depends on the variety), drain lightly and tip back into the empty pan. Add the pesto and the rocket leaves, then toss gently to mix. Serve with extra Parmesan and toasted pine kernels if you wish.
Mustard & lemon sausages
with carrot mash

Serves 4

8 plump pork sausages
2 tablespoons of grain mustard
1 tablespoon of smooth Dijon mustard
3 heaped tablespoons of runny honey
2 tablespoons of lemon juice

For the mash
750g carrots
large knob of butter

Set the oven at 200°C/gas mark 6.

Put the sausages in a roasting tin large enough to place them in a single layer. If they overlap, they won’t cook properly.

In a bowl mix the mustards, honey and lemon juice and stir well. Pour this mixture over the sausages and toss gently.

Bake for 25–30 minutes, rolling the sausages over in the honey and mustard mixture once or twice so that they eventually take on a sticky, glossy coat.

To make the mash, trim and scrub the carrots, slice into chunks and pile into a steamer basket or metal colander balanced over a pan of simmering water.

Steam, covered, for 15–20 minutes or until just tender. Remove the carrots from the steamer and mash with a generous knob of butter.

Divide the mash between 4 plates and pop the sausages on top.
Veg patch stew

Serves 4 with plenty left for a veg pie or pasta sauce

olive oil
1 large aubergine, halved and thinly sliced
3 courgettes, halved and sliced
4 peppers (orange and red)
2 onions, peeled and roughly sliced
2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
marjoram, parsley and thyme
3 medium tomatoes, quartered
12 cherry tomatoes
500ml jar of tomato passata or crushed tomatoes
3 bay leaves
1 handful of basil leaves

The trick here is to avoid the temptation to cook this like a stew with all the ingredients lumped in together. It takes longer to cook them separately, but the individual attention allows each ingredient to keep its own character. You end up with layers of flavour rather than a casserole. Like quiche, this is better served warm than hot.

Heat a shallow layer of olive oil in a large, low-sided pan and brown the aubergine on both sides. Remove from pan and set aside. Fry each of the other vegetables separately in the order above, adding more oil as necessary. Remove as each one is ready and set aside.

Cook the onions and garlic together – do not remove from the pan once cooked. Add the herbs along with the tomatoes and allow to cook a little before transferring the cooked peppers back into the pan. Add the passata and leave to simmer with the lid on. When the sauce is reduced a little, transfer the aubergine and courgettes back into the pan along with the bay leaves and season to taste. Leave to simmer for a few more minutes. Stir gently with a handful of torn basil leaves and serve.
Salad

The most memorable salads for me are the simplest, made with the freshest produce. When you’ve grown your own, the last thing you want is for them to get lost in a jumble of frilly extras and strong dressings.

There’s rarely a recipe for my leaves - I just wander round the garden and put things in a bowl depending on what I have. In this case, a few broad beans, some tomatillos (an exciting tomato-like fruit new to me), a carrot and a few herbs — mint, chives, thyme. A few edible flower leaves sometimes find their way in too.

Toss everything together and trickle with good quality olive oil. A little seasoning if you like - it’s up to you. Serve as soon as you can after harvesting to really enjoy the crunchy fruits of your labour.
Who prepares wins

Now’s not quite the time to throw in the trowel. You may have harvested your veg but there’s still lots to do. Our favourite TV gardener, Blue Peter’s Chris Collins, shares his top tips on the jobs that need doing as the seasons change.

Chris has been working with Dig In all year. You may have been lucky enough to have met him on the Dig In tour and asked for his advice about your growing woes. If not, check out his Q&A films on bbc.co.uk/digin

Keeping your carrots
If you’ve had a successful season you might find yourself overloaded with Chantenay carrots. But you don’t have to eat them all at once! Store them in trays somewhere cool and dry, like a garage or shed, with a layer of sand over the top for extra protection. Use them through the winter as and when you need them.

Recycling your Dig In beans
Once the season has ended for your climbing French beans, the left-over stems can be dug back into the soil. These plants, known as legumes, have special nodules attached to their roots that are rich in nitrogen which is a key growing ingredient in soil.

Dying to be composted
Any over-ripe or unused vegetables can be added to the compost heap. They will rot down over the winter and you’ll end up with lovely rich compost to dig in to your soil next spring.

Dig over your plot
Autumn is an excellent time to improve your soil and the double dig method is great exercise. Dig a trench, add a layer of well-rotted farmyard manure in the bottom and mix it in with soil from your next trench. This is especially good for heavy clay soils as the winter weather will help break it down into better veg-growing soil.

A gardener is as good as his tools
The winter is an important time for getting your shed in order – all those spades and forks should be cleaned and oiled, and shears and secateurs sharpened.

Carry on growing
Just because the dark months are getting nearer, it doesn’t mean that you can’t still grow some fresh veg. Look out for seeds of winter lettuce, mizuna, purslane or salad rocket. These are easy-to-grow crops and will give quick results.

Grow fruit
If you’ve been inspired by your veggie growing, you could move on to fruit. Autumn is an excellent time of year to plant fruit trees or soft fruit. Do your homework on the type of varieties you want and make sure to add some well-rotted manure to the planting pit. Save some to mulch around the plant base to protect roots from winter frosts.

Getting ahead
Plan your next growing season. Sketch your plot and keep in mind rotation – don’t plant the same vegetables in the same spot you grew them in this year. Check seed catalogues to see which seeds you should sow this autumn. For example, broad beans and peas can be sown in November and garlic is traditionally planted in December. Spring cabbages can be sown into a propagator throughout the autumn.

Remember — a good gardener is always thinking ahead!
Keen as a bean but still not ready to sow on your own?

There are plenty of expert organisations out there to support you while you grow.

**Royal Horticultural Society**
One of the country’s top gardening charities, the RHS offers support to gardeners of all abilities, and has a great Grow Your Own campaign. On the website you’ll find lots of useful stuff. Take a look at their veg A-Z, downloadable planner and ipod application and their archive of video clips. rhs.org.uk

**All about allotments**
Want to branch out? Need more growing space? Check with your local council or visit the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners for everything you need to know about running an allotment. nsalg.org.uk

**Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens**
Supports growing in community farms and gardens. Not only do you get the satisfaction that growing brings but you also get more involved with the local community. Take a look at the website to find a farm or garden near you. farmgarden.org.uk

**Garden Organic**
If you’d like to grow organic, visit the website and you’ll find advice on all aspects of organic growing, including tips on when to do which jobs in the garden and answers to frequently asked questions. gardenorganic.org.uk

**Eat Seasonably**
There’s nothing like fresh fruit and vegetables at their seasonal best: better taste, better value and better for the planet. Visit the website to find out what’s best right now, plus tips, recipes and step-by-step instructions to grow your own. eatseasonably.co.uk

**Gardeners Click**
Getting gardeners together online. A place to create a profile, make new friends, share tips and upload photos of your veg. gardenersclick.com