

A group of five male chefs standing in a row against a textured, grey stone-like wall. They are all wearing white short-sleeved chef's jackets, white hats, and blue aprons. The chef in the center is slightly taller and has a beard. The other four chefs are of varying heights and ethnicities. They are all looking directly at the camera with neutral expressions. The floor is made of dark wood.

# RAISING THE STEAKS

Fifteen London has a new head chef, leading the apprentices in the art of butchery and Sunday roasts, all showcased in these beautiful British beef recipes

Words **Clare Knivett** Recipes **Robbin Holmgren** Photography **David Munns**





## SIRLOIN WITH POTATO GRATIN CHIPS

Ask your butcher for sirloin, aged for at least three weeks. A meat thermometer is essential for this recipe. Start brining the night before - the chips are cooked, cooled, then fried, so you could start them at the same time.

### Serves 2

- Salt, for brining
- 2 x 350g sirloin steaks
- A splash of oil
- A knob of butter

### Fifteen's chilli ketchup (makes 1 litre)

- 1 scotch bonnet chilli, halved, deseeded and quartered
- 10 black peppercorns
- 6 allspice berries
- 6 cloves
- 1.2kg tomatoes, cut into large chunks
- 400g braeburn apples, peeled and cored
- 2 onions, peeled and chopped
- 275g sugar
- 350ml malt vinegar
- A pinch of salt

### Potato gratin chips

- 30g butter
- 2 sprigs of thyme
- 500g king edward potatoes, peeled
- Vegetable oil, for deep-frying

### 1 Make your brine - see box on p51.

In a large, non-metallic bowl, combine the water and salt, and soak the meat in it for 6-8 hours, or overnight.

**2** Make your chilli ketchup. Place the chilli in a pan of boiling water for 10 seconds, then refresh with cold water. Do this twice more. It gets the fruity character of the chilli into the ketchup without retaining all the heat. Of course, you can skip this step if you are after a fiery sauce.

**3** Tie up the peppercorns, allspice and cloves in a square of cheesecloth or muslin and pop in a pan with the chilli and all the other ketchup ingredients. Bring to a boil over a medium heat for 45-60 minutes, until the liquid has almost evaporated and the mixture is the consistency of a thick soup.

**4** Take off the heat and allow to cool for 5 minutes, then blitz with a stick

Asked if the kitchen at Fifteen is very different to your average restaurant, Robbin Holmgren lets out a telling laugh. "The biggest challenge is the space," concedes the newly appointed head chef. "I have a full-time team of chefs as well as the apprentices four days a week. It's a challenging balance between a school and a restaurant."

Having joined Fifteen two years ago in a development role, Robbin took charge in January this year. Before Fifteen he worked in restaurants in his native Sweden, including Michelin-starred Mistral in Stockholm. But it was his six years at Fergus Henderson's St John restaurant in London that provided him with what he describes as his base. "With daily changing menus and nose-to-tail eating at St John, you have to think on your feet," he says. "That's what I want to give the apprentices; the best skill base they can get. Then the rest is up to them."

Every year, 18 unemployed young people, aged 18 to 25, step through Fifteen's door with no or limited knowledge of working in a professional kitchen. The aim is to give them the opportunity to gain skills, discipline and passion so that they can create a future for themselves. For Robbin, it's essential that the recruits have a solid understanding of the basics, as he learned at St John. "I want them doing lots of



SIRLOIN WITH POTATO GRATIN CHIPS

Props styling: Linda Berlin



"I FEEL LIKE THESE ARE  
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Opening page: The head chef and some of the apprentices - from left: Jeremiah Bailey, Tom Oliver, Robbin Holmgren, Sean O'Sullivan, Jason Cook. Previous spread: Sean and Jason bringing out the beef for prepping. This page: Sean (opposite) and Jeremiah (above right) get to grips with their new butchery skills, while Robbin (above left) checks the flavours coming together in the kitchen.

butchery - real hands-on experience," he emphasises. "That's the only way to progress as a chef. By looking at something and working out what you can do with it."

As his team sharpen their knives and lay out their *mise en place*, it's evident that they're well and truly hooked. "I feel like these are skills I'll have forever," says Sean, proudly explaining that he now has a 10-year plan. "I've decided I want to be a pastry chef - I love how precise you have to be."

Tom heard about the course through a family friend. "They tell you from the start - 'this will change your life'. And I'm thinking, it can't change it that much, surely? But I'm halfway through the course, and I'm like wow, I still can't quite get my head around what it does for people."

The restaurant feeds its profits back into the charity, so it's important to keep standards high. For Robbin, flavour, local produce and accessibility are key, evident in the new Sunday roasts menu, the introduction of old-fashioned techniques and an increase in sharing plates. "I'm not into trying to make food look like something it's not," says Robbin. "I like honest food. Everything on the plate has to be really, really tasty, that's the most important thing." The stunning beef recipes over the page are testament to that.

Put simply, Fifteen is all about good food with a positive impact. "It's a life changer," says apprentice Jeremiah. "With the guidance you get here, you're aiming to be a good chef, with high standards - it only leads to greatness."

Jamie Oliver's Fifteen, 15 Westland Place, London N1 7LP; 020 3375 1515; [fifteen.net](http://fifteen.net)

blender until smooth. Sieve the ketchup and pour into sterilised bottles or jars. This will keep in the fridge for up to 2 months - and it only gets better with time!

**5** Preheat the oven to 180C/gas 4. For the potatoes, melt the butter in a small pan, take off the heat, then add the thyme and leave to infuse for 15 minutes. Remove the thyme.

**6** Line a 15 x 10cm oven dish with baking paper. Using a mandoline, slice the potato very finely. Toss with the thyme butter and season well. Layer the potatoes in the tray and cover with foil. Bake for 45 minutes, or until very soft when pierced with a knife.

**7** Remove the potatoes from the oven and weigh them down with something heavy so the layers set together. Leave to cool completely.

**8** Drain the sirloin and pat dry with kitchen paper. Heat the oil and butter in a pan over a high heat, then fry the steak until coloured all over. Transfer to an oven tray and roast until it has a core temperature of 53C on a meat thermometer, about 8 minutes.

**9** Remove your potato from the



BRAISED SHORT RIB  
WITH YUKON GOLD MASH

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## Fine brining

Brining gets extra flavour into your beef and is worth the investment of time. Your brine needs to be five per cent salt to the volume of water you need to cover the meat. Some brines include sugar, and you can add other aromatics. For these recipes, allow at least 6–8 hours for brining, or ideally overnight.

baking dish, trim the edges and cut into 1cm-thick rectangles. Half-fill a heavy-bottomed pan with veg oil and heat until it reaches 160C on a thermometer, or test by dropping in a cube of bread – if it turns brown in 30 seconds, the oil is ready. Deep-fry the chips, in batches, for 5–6 minutes, until golden. Remove and drain on kitchen paper.

**10** Serve the sirloin with the chips, and some chilli ketchup on the side.

**Per serving** 939 cals, 48.7g fat (20.3g sat fats), 80.8g protein, 46.9g carbs, 5.7g sugars

## BRAISED SHORT RIB WITH YUKON GOLD MASH

**Serves 4**

- 220g sugar, for brining
- 220g salt, for brining
- 2kg short rib of beef
- Vegetable oil
- 3 large onions, peeled, 2 sliced into rounds, 1 finely chopped
- Olive oil
- 1 celery stalk, finely chopped
- 1 carrot, finely chopped
- A few sprigs of thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 350ml red wine
- Wild garlic leaves, crispy shallots and grated cheddar, to serve

### Calçots

- 8 calçots or 12 spring onions (see note)
- 125ml lemon juice (about 4 lemons)
- 200ml olive oil
- 60g sugar
- 60g salt

### Mash

- 1kg potatoes, preferably yukon gold, peeled and evenly chopped
- 50g butter
- A splash of milk (optional)

**1** Make your brine: combine the sugar, salt and 3.5 litres of water in a very large non-metallic pan. Add the short rib and leave for 10–12 hours.

**2** Preheat the oven to 150C/gas 2. Heat a splash of veg oil in a large saucepan. Add the onion rings with a splash of water and pop the lid on. Cook over a low heat until soft, 20–25 minutes, stirring occasionally, being careful that they don’t colour or burn.

**3** Drain the short rib and pat dry with kitchen towel. Heat a little veg oil in a frying pan over a medium-high heat, then fry, making sure to get proper colour on it without burning. Remove from the pan and set aside.

**4** Add a drizzle of olive oil, then fry the finely chopped onion, celery, carrot, thyme and bay leaf over a medium heat until tender and golden. Pour in the red wine to deglaze.

**5** Tip into an oven dish that snugly fits the meat with the onion confit, 100ml water and the short rib. Cover with tinfoil and roast for 4–5 hours, until the meat is falling off the bone and the fat has broken down. Check it after 3½ hours: if the meat is almost ready, it should begin to break apart easily when you put pressure on it; if it is springy and doesn’t start to fall apart, it will need another hour or so.

**6** Soak the calçots for 10 minutes (skip this if using spring onions), then drain, trim the ends and rub all over to remove any grit. In a pan, combine 500ml of water with the lemon juice, olive oil, sugar and salt. Add the calçots or spring onions and simmer, lid on, for 7–8 minutes, until tender.

**7** For the mash, simmer the potatoes in a pan of salted water until cooked, about 15 minutes. Mash or press through a ricer, then mix in the butter. Loosen with milk, if needed. Season.

**8** Remove the ribs from the pan, then discard the bones and any large pieces of fat. Cut into four.

**9** Spoon the mash onto serving plates, top with the rich beef and serve with the calçots on the side. Scatter over the wild garlic leaves, crispy shallots and cheddar.

**Note** Calçots are large Catalan spring onions. Find them at natoora.co.uk.

**Per serving** 1,087 cals, 64.1g fat (28.9g sat fats), 54.3g protein, 62.5g carbs, 17g sugars

## SHORT-RIB CROQUETTES

**Makes 20**

- 110g sugar
- 110g salt
- 1kg short rib (or 400g leftover braised short-rib meat)
- Vegetable oil, for frying
- 2 large onions, peeled, 1 finely chopped, 1 sliced into rounds
- 1 celery stalk, roughly chopped
- 1 carrot, roughly chopped
- A few sprigs of thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 250ml red wine (a large glass)
- 20g worcestershire sauce
- 20g english mustard
- 50g flour
- 2 egg whites, lightly beaten
- 100g panko breadcrumbs
- Watercress, seasoned crème fraîche, grated lemon zest and horseradish, to serve

### Cheese sauce

- 25g butter
- 15g plain flour
- 170g milk
- 105g cheddar, grated

**1** Make your brine. Add the sugar, salt and 1.75 litres of water to a large non-metallic pan. Add the short rib and leave for 10–12 hours or overnight.

**2** Heat a splash of veg oil in a large pan over a medium-high heat. Drain the short rib, pat dry with kitchen paper and fry until nicely coloured, about 10–15 minutes.

**3** Make an onion confit. Heat a glug of oil in a pan, then add the onion rings with a splash of water. Cook, covered, over a low heat until soft and sweet, about 15–20 minutes, stirring occasionally, being careful not to let them colour. Tip into a snug oven dish. Preheat the oven to 150C/gas 2.

**4** In the same pan, heat a glug of oil and fry the finely chopped onion, celery, carrot, thyme and bay leaf over a medium heat, until golden. Pour in the red wine to deglaze.

**5** Tip the mixture into a the dish with the confit onions, along with the short rib and 100ml water. Cover with foil and roast for 3–4 hours, until the meat is falling off the bone.

**6** For the cheese sauce, melt the butter in a pan over a low heat, then add the flour. Stir well to combine and





SHORT-RIB CROQUETTES

**GREAT  
TO SHARE**

cook for a minute or two. Whisk in the milk in small additions until it is all incorporated, then bring to the boil and simmer for 3 minutes or until thickened. Whisk in the cheddar until smooth. Take off the heat, cover with cling film and leave to cool.

**7** Shred the 400g of meat, making sure there are no large chunks of fat. Combine it with 100g of the cheese sauce, the worcestershire and the mustard. Season, then use a spoon to portion it into 20g balls. Place them on a lined baking tray and pop in the freezer to firm up, about 20 minutes.

**8** Half-fill a deep, heavy-bottomed pan with veg oil. Place over a medium heat until 165C on a thermometer. Or drop in a cube of bread – if it browns in 30 seconds, the oil is ready.

**9** Place the flour, egg white and panko crumbs in three separate dishes. Dip the croquettes in the

flour, then the egg, shaking off any excess, then the crumbs, coating well.

**10** Lower the croquettes into the oil, in batches, and fry until crispy, about 4 minutes. Drain on kitchen paper. Serve with the watercress, crème fraîche, lemon zest and horseradish.

**Per serving** 175 cals, 12.8g fat (4.4g sat fats), 9.5g protein, 9.5g carbs, 2.1g sugars

## ROAST BEEF WITH EPIC TRIMMINGS

**Ask your butcher for a rump cap; it should be aged for at least three weeks. A meat thermometer is essential for this recipe. When draining the pickled walnuts, don't throw the vinegar away – it's lovely in a salad with a bit of olive oil!**

**Serves 6**

- 150g salt
- 1.3kg beef rump cap

- A splash of veg oil
- A knob of butter
- 30g plain flour
- 500ml hot beef stock

### Yorkshire puddings

- 3 large eggs
- 175ml milk
- 175g plain flour
- Vegetable oil

### Pickled-walnut salsa

- 170g jar of pickled walnuts, drained and thoroughly chopped (see note)
- A small handful of parsley, finely chopped
- ½ garlic clove, peeled and finely chopped
- 50ml olive oil
- 1½ tbsp capers
- Zest of ½ lemon

### Horseradish crème fraîche

- 200g crème fraîche
- ½ stick of horseradish, grated
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- ½ tsp sugar

### Vegetables

- 40g butter, plus a knob
- 3 large parsnips, halved or quartered
- Honey, to taste
- 2 small pointed cabbages, quartered
- A splash of sherry vinegar
- Olive oil
- 500g rainbow chard
- A splash of vinegar

**1** Make a brine by mixing the salt with 3 litres of water in a non-metallic container. Soak the meat in it for 6–8 hours or overnight.

**2** To make your yorkshire puddings, mix everything in a bowl with a pinch of salt and blitz with a stick blender. Leave to rest for at least 1 hour.

**3** Preheat the oven to 100C/gas ¼. Drain the meat and pat dry with kitchen towel. Heat the oil and butter in a large pan over a high heat, then fry the meat until nicely coloured all over. Put on a lipped tray in the oven and roast for 55 minutes, or until the centre reaches temperature of 53C on a meat thermometer.

**4** Meanwhile, make your sauces. Combine all of the walnut salsa ingredients in a bowl and set aside.

**5** For the horseradish crème fraîche, mix everything together in a bowl.



ROAST BEEF WITH EPIC TRIMMINGS





FLANK TARTARE

If it becomes too loose, you can just whip it up like cream. Set aside.

**6** Start the vegetables. Heat the 40g butter in a large frying pan on a low-medium heat, then put the parsnips in, cut-side down, drizzle over the honey and season. Place a lid on and allow to cook for 15-20 minutes until soft, then remove the lid and turn the heat up to colour and caramelise.

**7** When the beef is ready, remove it from the pan, then cover the tray with tinfoil and set aside. Turn the oven up to 220C/gas 7.

**8** Make a basic gravy – discard all but about 3 tablespoons of the beef pan juices and set over a low heat. Whisk in the flour to form a paste and cook for 3-4 minutes, whisking in the beef stock. Season and set aside in the pan.

**9** To cook the yorkshires, pour a little oil into each hole of a 12-hole muffin tin, then place in the oven to get nice

and hot. Pour in your rested batter, then bake for about 12-14 minutes, until puffed up and golden.

**10** Meanwhile, gently blanch the cabbage in a pan of salted boiling water for 1 minute, then drain.

**11** Place the knob of butter in a large frying pan over a medium heat and, once melted, pop in the cabbage quarters, cut-side down. Drizzle over the vinegar and turn the cabbage so it's lightly coated in the butter and vinegar. Remove from the pan.

**12** Take the pan off the heat, wipe with kitchen paper so it's clean and dry, then return to the heat. Once the pan is hot, pop in the cabbages, cut-side down, until the edges are lightly charred, about 1-2 minutes.

**13** In a pan, heat a splash of olive oil and a knob of butter over a medium heat, then wilt the chard leaves for 5-10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season with salt and the vinegar.

**14** Place your beef on a board and slice it while you heat the gravy. Serve with your veg, yorkshire puds, salsa and horseradish crème fraîche.

**Note** You can find pickled walnuts in big supermarkets or at [ocado.com](https://ocado.com).

**Per serving** 963 cals, 61g fat (27.7g sat fats), 61.2g protein, 45g carbs, 11.7g sugars

## FLANK TARTARE

If using bavette, ask your butcher to trim it for you, so you won't have to deal with any nasty sinew.

**Serves 4**

- 320g beef flank or bavette steak, cut into 3mm pieces
- 2 tsp dijon mustard
- 1 tsp worcestershire sauce
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp capers
- Toasted sourdough and 2 shallots, finely sliced into rings, to serve

### Tarragon mayo

- A small bunch of tarragon, leaves picked, stalks trimmed
- 30g baby spinach
- 250g vegetable oil
- 3 egg yolks
- 1 tsp dijon mustard
- A splash of cider vinegar
- Lemon juice, to taste

**1** Start by making the tarragon mayo. Blanch most of the tarragon (saving some to garnish) and the spinach in a pan of boiling water for 10 seconds.

Tip into a colander and rinse under cold water to refresh. Squeeze the leaves to remove most of the water.

**2** Blitz the leaves in a blender with the veg oil until smooth. Set aside.

**3** Blend your mayo using a blender or a hand whisk. Add the egg yolks, then the mustard, vinegar and a pinch of salt, and mix for 30 seconds, or until emulsified and starting to thicken.

**4** Add a few drops of water, then the green oil, in a steady stream. Loosen with a splash of water, if needed. Add a squeeze of lemon juice, and season.

**5** Toss the meat with the mustard, worcestershire, oil and capers. Divide between the toasts, scatter over the shallot rings and tarragon leaves, and serve with the tarragon mayo. ●

**Per serving** 803 cals, 78.8g fat (12.4g sat fats), 21.8g protein, 1.3g carbs, 0.7g sugars