

Cook with

# Nanna



Learn to cook plant-based recipes from a seasoned pro.

**VegKit**.com



The Nanna Diaries:

## Family traditions, reimagined

I thought going vegan would mean saying goodbye to my Nanna's lasagne. As it turns out, it was the beginning of a whole new adventure.

My nanna Mirella has always connected with her loved ones through food, so when I went plant-based, I worried I'd lose more than just her lasagne — I feared losing the special bond we'd built cooking together in her kitchen.

Then one day, the phone rang: "Claudia, I find vegan cheese for you — I make you lasagne."

And it was the best lasagne I'd ever tasted. More importantly, it was *hers*. It showed me that traditions aren't lost as we grow — they evolve with us.

From there, we reimagined all her favourite recipes: schnitzels, cakes, soups, pastas... all plant-based, all still authentically Nanna's. Soon enough, our family dinners were overflowing with vegan dishes, and no one could even tell the difference.

*The Nanna Diaries* is about more than delicious food: it's a love letter to my 86-year-old Nanna, my



*"... traditions aren't lost as we grow — they evolve with us"*

Venezuelan-Italian roots, and the incredible flavours that have shaped our family for generations.

This recipe book is a slice of Nanna's story — one that has taught me that compassion for animals and tradition can go hand in hand. We hope these special dishes bring warmth to your kitchen and joy to your table — and maybe even spark your own plant-based traditions.

Oh, and Nanna says don't forget to bring your containers — you're gonna want leftovers!

**Claudia Altavilla,**  
*Proud grandchild*



Learn more about  
Nanna at [VegKit.com](https://vegkit.com)



# From Nanna's kitchen to yours

For years, Nanna's recipes existed only in her mind — measured in handfuls, taste tests, and pinches of this or that. Lucky for us, she's finally let us write down some of her favourite family dishes, so you can bring that same Nanna warmth and magic into your own home.



## Nanna's Marble Cake

Serves 10-12

20 mins to prep

60 mins to bake



## Nanna's Sauteed Potato and Silverbeet

Serves 4

10 mins to prep

25 mins to cook



## Nanna's Arepas

Serves 6

10 mins to prep

15 mins to cook



## Nanna's Fettuccine with Meatballs

Serves 6

20 mins to prep

35 mins to cook



## Nanna's Gnocchi

Serves 4

60 mins to prep

15 mins to cook



## Nanna's Eggplant Parmigiana Paninis

Serves 4

25 mins to prep

15 mins to cook





# Nanna's Lasagne

 Serves 6-8

 30 mins to prep

 2 hours to cook



The dish that started it all! Nanna's plant-based lasagne is rich, saucy, and layered with love. The kind of dish that has everyone reaching for seconds, every bite is packed with tradition, nostalgia, and, of course, plenty of vegan cheese!

Recipe: Nanna Mirella | Photography: Brendan Cherry



## For the Bolognese sauce:

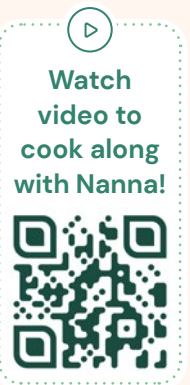
- 1 carrot
- 2 celery stalks
- 1 brown onion
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1-2 tablespoon Italian herbs
- 2-3 fresh basil leaves
- 2-3 bay leaves, dried or fresh
- 340g vegan mince or burger patties (we used Beyond Meat)
- 125ml red wine
- 700g bottle passata (we used Mutti)
- 400g diced tomatoes
- Salt and pepper, to taste

## For the lasagne:

- 1 pack lasagne sheets, gluten-free if needed (we used Barilla)
- 3 vegan eggs (we used McKenzie's Egg Replacer)
- 1 cup vegan parmesan, divided among layers and topping
- 1 - 1 1/2 cups vegan mozzarella shreds

## Directions:

- 1 Finely dice the carrot, celery, and onion. Heat olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the vegetables, Italian herbs, basil, bay leaves, salt, and pepper. Cook until soft and fragrant.
- 2 Add the vegan mince, break it up, and cook until browned. Pour in the wine and cook until mostly evaporated.
- 3 Add the passata. Fill the empty jar 3/4 with water, swirl to rinse, and pour into the pan. Add diced tomatoes, then taste and adjust seasoning.
- 4 Once bubbling, simmer over medium heat for 1 hour, stirring occasionally with the lid partially on to prevent the mince absorbing too much liquid.
- 5 Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F). Parboil lasagne sheets in batches until just bendable; lay flat on clean tea towels to dry.
- 6 Spread a thin layer of Bolognese sauce over the base of a medium ceramic baking dish and top with lasagne sheets. Add another layer of sauce, grated mozzarella, parmesan, and a few spoonfuls of egg replacer (prepared according to box instructions), focusing on the corners and edges.
- 7 Repeat layering pasta, sauce, cheese, and egg replacer, alternating the direction of the pasta sheets. Finish with sauce and a sprinkle of parmesan.
- 8 Cover the lasagne with baking paper and foil, then bake for 40-60 minutes until bubbling and golden.





## Nanna's Apple Cake

 Serves 10-12

 45 mins to prep

 60 mins to bake

**Moist, fragrant, and dappled with tender fruit, this gently spiced apple cake is a timeless favourite just begging to be served with a cup of tea, or if you're at Nanna's house, a cafetière coffee.**

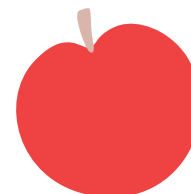
*Recipe: Nanna Mirella | Photography: Rainbow Nourishments*

### You will need:

- 4 red apples
- 1 lemon, zest and juice
- 4 vegan eggs (we used Orgran No Egg)
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup olive oil
- 1 teaspoon vanilla essence
- Pinch of salt
- 2 cups self-raising flour
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 cup sultanas
- Icing sugar, for dusting

### Directions:

- 1** Preheat the oven to 170°C (fan-forced). Grease or line a 24cm round cake tin with baking paper.
- 2** Grate 2 apples, dice 1 into small cubes, and set aside the remaining apple for garnish. Squeeze the juice from the grated apples and set it aside — you may need it later. Zest and juice the lemon.
- 3** In a large bowl, whisk together the egg replacer as per packet instructions. Add sugar, olive oil, lemon juice, vanilla essence, and a pinch of salt. Mix well.
- 4** Stir in the grated and cubed apples, plus the lemon zest.
- 5** Add flour and cinnamon. Mix gently with a wooden spoon until just combined. If the mixture feels too dry, stir in a little of the reserved apple juice until it comes together.
- 6** Fold in the sultanas.
- 7** Pour the batter into the prepared tin and smooth the top. Slice the final apple into thin half-moons and arrange on top as desired.
- 8** Bake for 45–60 minutes, checking at 45 minutes. If a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean, it's ready.
- 9** Allow cake to cool in the tin for 10–15 minutes to avoid crumbling, then gently turn the cake out onto a serving dish. Once completely cooled, dust with icing sugar and serve.





# Nanna's Pasta Fagioli

🕒 Serves 6

🕒 15 mins to prep

🕒 60 mins to cook



**Nanna's hug-in-a-bowl!** A hearty mix of beans, pasta, and veggies, this comforting classic has fed and soothed generations. Best enjoyed with a big spoon and an even bigger appetite.

*Recipe: Nanna Mirella | Photography: Rainbow Nourishments*

## You will need:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion
- 2 garlic cloves
- 3 medium–large celery stalks (1 for soffrito, 2 for soup)
- 2 medium carrots (1 for soffrito, 1 for soup)
- 2–3 medium potatoes
- 1.5 litre vegetable stock (plus extra boiling water if needed)
- 2 cans borlotti beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 vegetable stock cube (optional, for extra flavour)
- 1–2 ladles Napoli sauce (store-bought or make your own\*), or you can use passata
- 200g short pasta (gluten-free if needed)
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Vegan parmesan (optional)



## Directions:

- 1 Finely chop the onion, garlic, 1 celery stalk, and 1 carrot to make a soffrito. Cook gently in olive oil over low heat in a large pot, stirring occasionally.
- 2 While the soffrito cooks, chop the remaining carrot, celery, and potatoes into bite-sized pieces. Add them to the pot with the vegetable stock.
- 3 Stir in the borlotti beans, and stock cube (if using). Bring to a boil, then add Napoli sauce or passata. Reduce to a simmer and cook for about 30 minutes.
- 4 Add the pasta once the vegetables have softened, and cook for another 10–15 minutes, or as directed on the packet. If the soup thickens too much, stir in extra boiling water — we added 1–2 cups.
- 5 Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- 6 Serve hot, topped with vegan parmesan if desired.



**\*For Nanna's authentic flavour, scan here to make a batch of her delicious, versatile Napoli sauce first.**





# Nanna's Carrot Cake

 Serves 6

 20 mins to prep

 35 mins to cook

A chance surplus of apples one day led Nanna to casually create what some now call *the best carrot cake of all time*. Moist, citrusy, and loaded with walnuts, it's a moreish masterpiece that proves Nanna's instincts are always spot on.

Recipe: Nanna Mirella | Photography: Rainbow Nourishments

## You will need:

- 2 cups grated carrot
- 2 cups grated apple
- 1 lemon, zest and juice
- 6 vegan eggs (we used Orgran No Egg)
- 1 1/2 cups of brown sugar
- 3/4 cup of light olive oil
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- Pinch of salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla essence
- 1 cup walnuts, chopped (optional)
- 1 cup sultanas
- 2 cups self-raising flour

## For the icing:

- 300g vegan cream cheese, room temperature
- 3 cups icing sugar
- 1 lemon, zest
- 1/2 lemon, juiced
- 1 cup walnuts, chopped (optional)

## Directions:

- 1 Preheat oven to 180°C. Grease a 22cm round cake tin with oil and dust lightly with flour.
- 2 To keep cake from being too wet, squeeze juice from grated carrot and apple into a small bowl; reserve to adjust batter later if needed. Combine carrot, apple, and lemon zest in a large bowl.
- 3 Prepare the vegan egg replacer as per packet instructions, then stir in brown sugar, oil, cinnamon, and a pinch of salt.
- 4 Combine this wet mixture with the carrot-apple mixture. Stir in lemon juice, vanilla, chopped walnuts, and sultanas.
- 5 Gradually fold in self-raising flour until smooth. The batter should be thick but moist, dropping slowly from the spoon and holding its shape. Adjust with reserved juice if too dry, or a little more flour if too loose and runny.
- 6 Pour batter into the prepared tin and bake for about 1 hour, checking at 45 minutes. A skewer inserted into the centre should come out clean. Cool in the tin for 10–15 minutes, then gently turn out onto a serving dish.
- 7 For the icing, whisk vegan cream cheese, icing sugar, lemon zest, and lemon juice until smooth. Once the cake is fully cooled, spread the icing and decorate with chopped walnuts.





## Nanna's Zucchini Chips

 Serves 4

 20 mins to prep

 20 mins to cook

These zucchini chips are Nanna's ploy to get everyone to eat their veggies! And with a crunchy outside and melt-in-the-mouth inside, legend has it that no zucchini chip has ever gone uneaten.

Recipe: Nanna Mirella | Photography: Rainbow Nourishments

### You will need:

- 2 zucchini
- 1 1/3 cups plain flour, or gluten-free option if needed (reserve 1/3 cup for wet batter)
- 2/3 cup cornflour
- 1/2 cup cold soda water
- 1 1/2 cups vegetable oil
- Salt, to taste

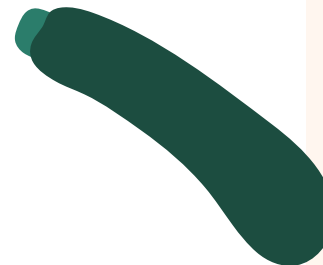
### Directions:

- 1 Cut zucchini into 2–3 pieces lengthwise (6–7cm long), then slice chunks into chip-like strips (about 1cm wide). Place on a flat surface, sprinkle with salt, and set aside to draw out moisture.
- 2 Place 1 cup plain flour in a medium bowl for coating. In another bowl, whisk the remaining 1/3 cup flour, cornflour, and soda water until it reaches a smooth, pancake-batter consistency.
- 3 Heat vegetable oil in a medium frypan over medium heat, deep enough for shallow-frying. Test readiness by dipping the end of a wooden spoon into it — if bubbles form around the spoon, the oil is hot enough.
- 4 Pat the zucchini dry with paper towel. Working in batches, lightly coat zucchini in dry flour, then dip in the wet batter, letting excess drip off. Fry, turning occasionally, until golden, about 5 minutes per batch.
- 5 Transfer chips to a paper towel-lined plate to drain excess oil. Season with extra salt and serve hot.



### Nanna's notes:

Consider your favourite shape for chips when chopping. Slice your zucchini nice and thin for extra crunch, or cut them into thicker, rustic wedges if you like a softer, more 'chip-like' centre. Or go rogue and slice them into rounds for little nugget-sized bites!





## Nanna's Apple Frittole

 Serves 6

 25 mins to prep

 15 mins to cook

**Nanna believes that fruit does, in fact, count as dessert — when they're grated, fried, and sufficiently dusted with sugar, that is. It's gotta feel like a treat, after all!**

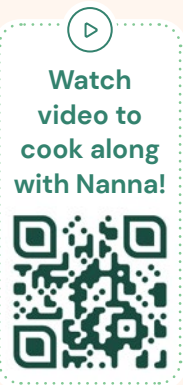
*Recipe: Nanna Mirella | Photography: Brendan Cherry*

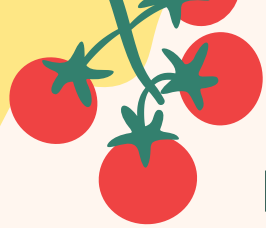
### You will need:

- 2 pink lady apples
- 1 orange, zest and juice
- 5 vegan eggs (we used Orgran No Egg)
- 1/2 cup of caster sugar
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons oat milk (any plant-based milk works fine!)
- 3/4 cup sultanas
- 1 teaspoon vanilla essence
- 1/2 – 3/4 cup self-raising flour
- 1 1/2 – 2 cups vegetable oil
- Icing sugar, for dusting

### Directions:

- 1** Grate the apples into a large bowl. Squeeze out and discard any excess juice using a muslin cloth, then set the apples aside. Zest and juice the orange, reserving the juice for later.
- 2** In a separate bowl, prepare the vegan eggs according to the packet instructions. Add them to the apples, along with the orange zest, caster sugar, cinnamon, oat milk, sultanas, and vanilla essence. Stir until well combined.
- 3** Gradually add the self-raising flour, starting with 1/2 a cup. Mix until the batter is slightly sticky and holds its shape on a spoon. If it becomes too dry, stir in a little of the reserved orange juice to loosen it.
- 4** Pour vegetable oil into a deep frying pan and heat over medium. To test if it's ready, dip in the handle of a wooden spoon — if bubbles form around it, the oil is hot enough.
- 5** Using two spoons, scoop and shape a dollop of batter, then gently slide it into the oil. Fry in batches, turning to brown evenly on all sides. Adjust the heat to avoid burning the outside before the inside is cooked through.
- 6** Once golden, remove the frittole with a slotted spoon and drain on a paper towel-lined plate.
- 7** Dust with icing sugar and serve warm.





## Nanna's quick tips...

When it comes to plant-based cooking, Nanna has a trick up her sleeve for just about every dish. Here are some of her best tried-and-tested tips to help you cook like a pro.



**Q. What's your secret to making the perfect vegan lasagne?**

*"You must make sure it sticks together. Vegan cheese doesn't always do this, so I mix up a little egg replacer and spoon some in the corners of each layer, to help it stick together. And you must wait for the lasagne to cool a little before slicing — otherwise it could fall apart!"*

**Q. How do you infuse your dishes with so much flavour?**

*"Plenty herbs! I keep dried herbs in my pantry, or pick fresh ones from my garden. I have one tree full of bay leaves, and plenty basil and parsley. They're my favourites. I no like coriander."*



**Q. How did you get your grandchildren to eat their veggies when they were growing up?**

*"Sometimes, you must trick the children. Hide the vegetables in their food — you'd never know how many veggies are in my vegan meatballs."*



**Q. What's your top vegan cooking tip?**

*"Always have powdered egg replacer in your pantry. If I follow a recipe that isn't vegan and it uses eggs, to make this recipe vegan, I make a bit more vegan egg than it says. If it says to use 2 eggs, I'd maybe make 3 or 4 vegan ones, depending on what I'm cooking."*

**Q. Do you have any shortcuts you use for your home-cooked meals?**

*"The freezer is your best friend. I always have frozen Napoli sauce ready to go. If I'm making pasta, soup or eggplant parmigiana, it's there waiting for me."*



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