

Alejandro Ruiz

Visceral Matter



VISCERAL MATTER

This publication serves as documentation of the experimental exhibition and dinner that took place in David Dale Gallery's warehouse on the 7th of August, 2024.

The project is the culmination of Vica Gábor's master's course in Curatorial Practice (Contemporary Art), a joint programme of the Glasgow School of Art and the University of Glasgow.

The solo show of Alejandro Ruiz exhibited ten artworks, exploring different perspectives on what contemporary jewellery is.

The event aimed to create an intimate, dynamic space for interaction with the exhibited objects and with one another.

SPECIAL THANKS

...to Alejandro Ruiz for allowing me to curate their work and collaborating with me as a colleague and as a friend.

... to Dr. Karen Di Franco and Dr. Alexandra Ross, tutors of Curatorial Practice (Contemporary Art), for their continuous support throughout the three semesters and in the materialisation of the final project and this publication.

... to Lydia Honebone and the Glasgow Supper Club for providing their beautiful recipes and catering the dinner in this unusual location.

... to Max Slaven for accommodating the event at David Dale Gallery's warehouse and making us feel at home in the space.

... to Thorne John from the Glasgow School of Art Sustainability Fund for supporting this project.

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CONTENTS

Artist's Bio	6
Experimentia by Vica Gábor	9
RELAKX by Hazel Glass	14
Interaction Cards	22
Dialogue	24
Video	34
Glasgow Supper Club	36
Recipes	38





ALEJANDRO RUIZ

ARTIST'S BIO

Alejandro Ruiz completed their first BA in Fine Arts at the University of Seville in Spain and the University of Saint-Denis (Paris) in 2012. After arriving in Glasgow, Ruiz pursued a one-year jewellery education at Glasgow College. They then continued their studies in the Silversmithing and Jewellery Design BA (Hons) programme at The Glasgow School of Art from 2019 to 2024. Ruiz has exhibited internationally in Spain, Hungary, and other countries. Throughout their education, they researched and experimented with the boundaries of jewellery, with a particular focus on the human body and its relationship with wearable objects.



EXPERIMENTIA

Vica Gábor

This project has multiple collaborative elements; like the one between artist and curator, where the essential part of the partnership lies in a similar way of thinking about experimentation, playfulness, and diversity.

Experimental aspect: Alejandro decided to learn a new technique (casting) and use a new material (silicone) when they started working on this graduation collection. Similarly, I chose to introduce a non-typical curatorial tool (dinner) into the cultural space as an experiment and created interaction cards specifically designed for this exhibition. This search for a different perspective, showing another way of seeing, is an essential element of Alejandro's current and previous works.

Playfulness: Alejandro mixes profound concepts (like anxiety) with humour and playfulness. In my case, one of the ways I try to surprise the viewer is by offering interaction cards, which are also playful tools with serious aims, such as creating connections and shifting perspectives.

Diversity: Alejandro's jewellery not only adorns the body but also serves secondary purposes; it helps to relax, provides sensory pleasures, and can even ease the discomfort of baby teething.

The curation is a juxtaposition of eating, gathering, playing, and inviting the audience to become active participants in the exhibition (as models or guides).

I hope these common points not only strengthen our collaboration but also enhance the unique experience of Visceral Matter.

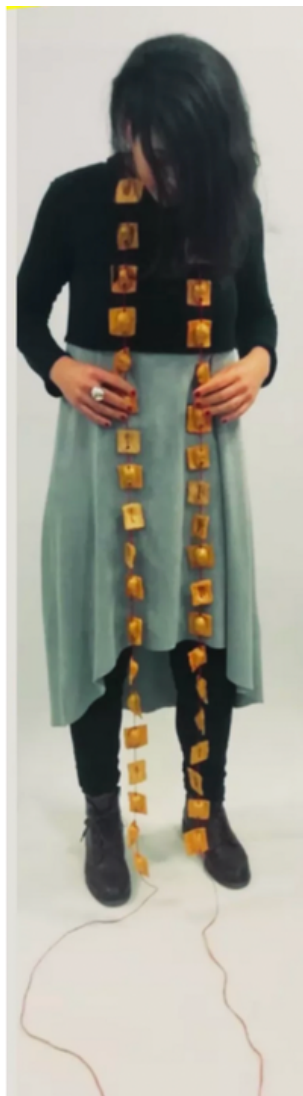
The second collaboration involves Hazel Glass, an art-writer based at David Dale Studio, who we asked to wear one of the exhibited neckpieces for two days. This playful experiment served as the starting point for her exhibition text. Hazel's text inspired us to film two actors, Persefoni Gerangelou and Adam Tompa, who read the text, creating a video that became an integral part of the installation. In Hazel's narrative, the jewellery Mimo is personified as a living creature, and her abstract text humorously explores the various characteristics of the jewellery.

The third collaboration in this project involved Lydia Honeybone, who, as part of the Glasgow Supper Club, created and cooked the menu for the dinner, drawing inspiration from the colours of the jewellery. Lydia specialises in sustainable vegan dishes served in unique, intimate locations such as her home or, in this instance, a gallery space. She designed the setting so that everything is displayed on serving platters as guests enter the dinner space, creating an opulent banquet aesthetic with raw fruits, vegetables, and candles.



The fourth collaboration occurred between the actors Persefoni and Adam, as well as myself. The idea to record a Zoom call was natural, as Persefoni, whom I really wanted to work with, lives in Athens, while Adam (another unique talent) lives in Glasgow. In this video, they portrayed an intimate scene, pretending that the obvious distance does not exist, and performed the exhibition text as a conversation. Although the text itself speaks from one person's perspective, we found a way to turn it into a dialogue without changing anything in the original text. The actors are naturally open to experimentation, and Persefoni and Adam approached this performance with a playful yet (and again) serious attitude.

Collaboration, experimentation, playfulness, serious humour, and changing perspectives are the seeds of Visceral Matter and also of my curatorial practice, but now as I think of it, these are also the motivations of my personal life.



Vica posing with her work,
photographed by Alejandro
Ruiz, 2019.



Alejandro Ruiz: *Yaku*
neckpiece, 9 x 3 x 13 cm
silicone, 2024

RELAKX

Hazel Glass

High Vis is on their knees. With a screwdriver in hand, they peer into the green box on the pavement, full of coloured wires. The first test is visual, for any obvious breakages, split wires, cables come loose. Then they proceed to remove a series of small panels in order, and test that the current is flowing as it should. They have sought malfunction so many times that this ritual is part of their muscle memory. But they could not do it with their eyes closed.

*

Inside me is a new void where two teeth have been extracted. The misguided bacteria of the gum cannot distinguish between threat and healthy teeth, so they battle to dissolve all the bones. My mouth is literally eating my mouth. To fill the gap, a partial denture. Two colour-matched teeth attached to a plate that slides up and, with natural suction, grips the palate. It is the shape of a prawn with tiny spikes.

*

The Curator tells me about jewellery that transforms into playground furniture, about concepts of non-wearability, where the boundaries of jewellery's form are pushed so far that the notion of a body is there, but only in the mind, as suggestion.



Alejandro Ruiz: *Nuku*
neckpiece, 14x3x7 cm
silicone, 2024

The Artist has previously made work based on internal organs, using the insides (real bodily fluids, the shape of a colon) to decorate the body exterior. The Artist hands me Mimo, a piece from Silica, their graduate collection. A curved, surprisingly supple silicon shape between horseshoe and wishbone, in a high-gloss shade of pastel rose. On first glance it evokes thumbs, dicks and thighs, and it is simply strung on a loop of pink rope. I am to wear it round my neck in the waking hours of the following two days.

*

High Vis has many pockets, favouring the cargo trousers that are oblivious to their own decades-long journey back into fashionability. In the front left pocket a stone. Always the left pocket. The stone is smooth. It is a pale grey gemstone, the name of which they have forgotten, with veins of black. Cool to the touch. It was my gift. They don't have to see it, just find it with their fingertips.

*

You can enhance the strength of an orgasm by placing the tongue on the roof of the mouth or touching the soles of the feet together. Closing the circuit. The blood circulatory system is not the only flow within you that can be blocked or smoothed. There are other currents. YouTube yoga suggests you drop into the sympathetic nervous system. You know how to self-soothe.

*



Alejandro Ruiz: *Visceral*
neckpiece, 110x5x0.3 cm
silicone sheet, brass 2024

At first, the denture sucks. My tongue can't stop troubling this alien plastic that grips the roof of my mouth and removes a sliver of sensitivity to flavour, texture and heat. But soon it becomes part of my gait—licking the acrylic—as central to my walk as the length of my stride. And from pavement to the tip of my tongue a vertical surge of squidgy voltage.

*

I belt my coat tight, and Mimo sits hard against the gap in my ribs, just below the breastbone, feeling warm, like I am sheltering the wing of a bird. I sneak soft strokes but find it prefers to be gripped tightly. This unholy hybrid of teething aid, massage tool and sex toy invites a firm hand, rewarding the wearer with waves of pleasure that are not uncomplicated. Mimo is an aid for living with everyday anxiety. The trick of a tool is to know that you need it.

*

At night it is only natural to show Mimo a movie by their spiritual grandpapa, so we settle down for an evening of eXistenZ. High Vis joins us on the sofa. Am I dreaming? Did Mimo just twitch against me at the sight of the fleshy bioport? Yes, just as my battle-hungry gums pulsed at the weapons made of amphibian bone, with their ammunition of human teeth.

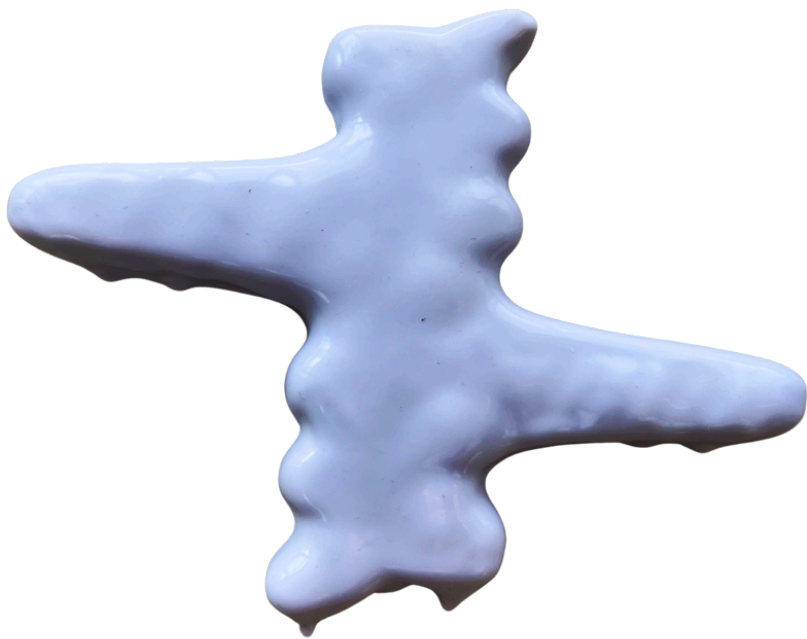
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Alejandro Ruiz: *Ikiki*
handpiece, 10x4x14 cm
silicone, 2024

And what can Mimo be for you?

A device for activation. Imagine the blood rush stomach flip when someone namedrops your crush – the opposite of that. The chill equivalent. Or a sensorial circuit board. Like when the chocolate melts in your mouth, connecting you to every other person who has chocolate melting in their mouth at that moment. Or a dangerous conversation starter. For the chewing of ice cubes is among the most common causes of tooth chipping. This is not science! Silicon does not conduct. Bodies do not follow logic. Cronenberg can read your mind. And Mimo acts as a deeply artificial talisman of queer tactility: a soothing, corporeal lucky charm.



Alejandro Ruiz: *Koi*
handpiece, 17x2x12 cm
silicone, 2024

The Yoko Ono exhibition -Music of the Mind- featured the Grapefruit book, a collection of instructions and drawings by the artist. The exhibition served as a significant inspiration, demonstrating how the audience can be involved and become participants. The cards were designed especially with this exhibition in mind and aim to achieve a similar experience. They create a safe and playful space where visitors can touch and wear the jewellery and even become guides of the exhibition. These cards are tools to encourage spending more time with the artwork and suggest ways to observe and contemplate what is seen. A few samples of these cards are shared in this publication, with the original set containing 25 different interactions.

INTERACTION

CARDS



Samples of the Interaction Cards

Vica Gábor: *How was this last year for you? How does it feel to look at your graduation work now? Tell me about this journey!*

Ale Ruiz: This year has been a real rollercoaster, filled with constant ups and downs. My personal life has mirrored this turbulence, swinging between highs and lows. Naturally, one's personal life is intertwined with one's creative journey, sometimes serving as a wellspring of inspiration and at other times as a source of hindrance.

Reflecting on my journey over this past year, I realise that I have had a wonderful opportunity to experiment, discover my unique voice, and express myself in ways I hadn't anticipated. It's fascinating to see how, despite the many rough moments I've encountered, the outcome of my efforts has been remarkably positive.

In the face of adversity, I've learned to channel my experiences into my work, transforming challenges into creative fuel. Each setback has taught me resilience and sparked new ideas, ultimately enriching my creative journey. Looking forward, I am eager to continue exploring and pushing boundaries, knowing that both the highs and lows contribute to my growth and artistic expression.

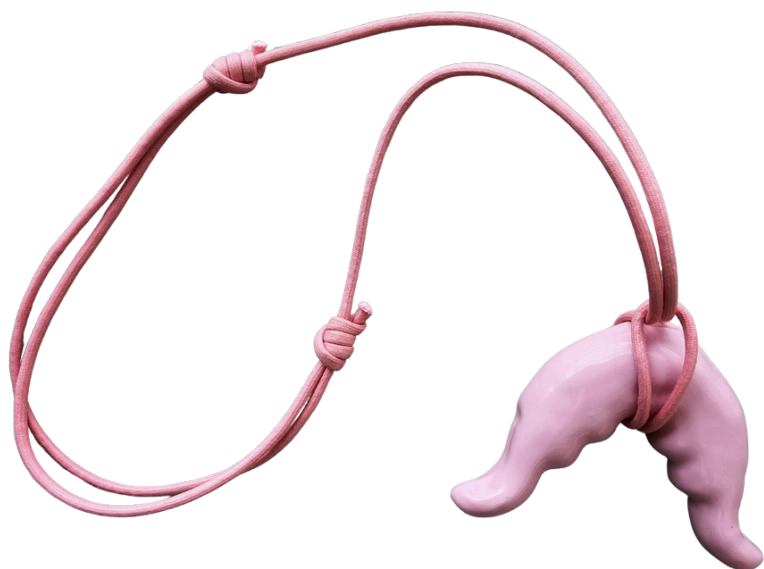
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VG: *What exactly do you mean when you speak about pushing your boundaries? In what direction do you want to go? Are you planning to continue experimenting with silicon and casting 3D-printed forms?*

AR: I meant pushing my boundaries by using more digital resources for the design process than I expected. Before this year, my design process was predominantly analogue. However, I allowed myself to explore and experiment with digital programs and tools this year.

For instance, I never thought I would use 3D printing. Now, I see myself using silicone again and delving deeper into this process. At the same time, I'm considering how to continue exploring, especially in combination with other materials and shapes. How do you push your boundaries in your practice in jewellery?

VG: *This year, my focus has been more on my curatorial research than on my jewellery practice. In curation, I aim to use non-typical curatorial tools to create intimate exhibitions, while in jewellery, I am still searching for my authentic self as a maker. For me, it is a process of unlearning and self-understanding.*



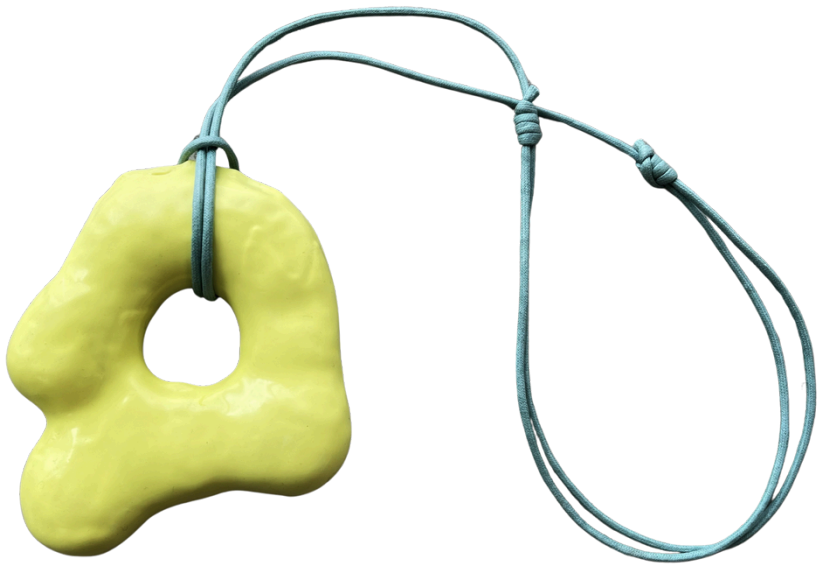
Alejandro Ruiz: *Mimo*
neckpiece, 9x3x9 cm
silicone, 2024

I see the personal and the universal as closely connected, and I want to explore that balance. To push my boundaries, I need to step away from the self and respond to what I see around me in society and culture. The idea that the universal and personal are intertwined gives me confidence in moving beyond the very personal starting points.

Does using a new technique or different materials change your concepts and the way you think about various topics? Has design become a more critical part of your work during this graduation year?

AR: I appreciate that question because my approach to practice has always been rooted in a very conceptual background. I've been striving to remain open regarding materiality, recognising that sometimes the concept guides me to determine which materials are necessary for specific pieces.

Focusing on *Silica* has been particularly significant, as the material conveys so much and aligns seamlessly with the ideas and sensations I aim to express. Having navigated the challenges that new techniques can introduce, I now find it crucial to remain open to diverse methods of creating work.



Alejandro Ruiz: *Washa*
neckpiece, 10x3x12 cm
silicone, 2024

Design has become more prominent this year, especially when there's a need to produce a series or a specific number of pieces quickly. Moreover, as I previously mentioned, exploring new and varied design tools has further broadened the scope of possibilities.

VG: *Your jewellery pieces are unique in that they serve a secondary function as relaxation tools. This perspective goes beyond traditional adornment, self-expression, or storytelling. What inspired you to create jewellery that also functions as a practical object? How do you see the relationship between the emotional expression of your work and its functional design coming together in these pieces?*

AR: I have always believed that the conceptual approach to arts is critical to creating an experience with the visitor/wearer and proposing an idea or message.

For this collection, I thought about how jewellery sometimes proposes something that stays more on the adornment side and how different objects we use for other purposes could be used as jewellery but have a more intimate function. Well, my work has a significant emotional expression in general, and this collection has a big part of it.



Alejandro Ruiz: *Eko*
neckpiece, 6x3x12 cm
silicone, 2024

It would be significant if the piece you are wearing could calm you down in a difficult moment or stimulate some sensations. People get a solid attachment to objects that communicate something to them apart from having an exciting design or, even better, proposing an intimate moment.

VG: When you look at your collection now, how do you feel? What does this collection mean to you personally?

AR: When I look at my collection now, I feel good; I feel proud of myself for not giving up even though I had a few temptations. I feel relieved because I managed to do work that made me learn a lot. Also, how people react when they experience the pieces is very meaningful to me because, behind it, there is a goal that is completed when the pieces are in relation to the user.

This collection means a lot to me personally because it is a statement, a declaration of who I am as an artist and what my proposal is in the jewellery world. It is innovation, and even though I worked on it just through my last year in the course, I can now see how it has been there baking, curing, and evolving all this time.

VG: How do you see your personal traits reflected in this artwork?

AR: Nice one, because this collection could be a portrait of myself and my personality. All these ideas around playing, comfort, stimulation, connection, etc., the minimal shapes focused on ergonomics and even the colours—you could see me one day wearing an outfit based on those colours! I think it was not intentional, but this collection represents who I am and how I interact in this world.

VG: I wonder what are your thoughts on the exhibition. We are still in July, and the exhibition is in 4 weeks, but I would like to know your thoughts on this experimental concept.

AR: Well, you know me—experimenting has been present in my entire life, so I am very grateful to be part of this experiment. I am very excited to merge my work with such a stimulating proposal on your part. Mixing the sense of taste in food and eating with my relaxation tools is wonderful because there is a significant sensory connection. Plus, the idea of gathering different people and exploring the concept of a happening is totally my thing.

.VG: I'm curious how you plan to continue your career. What are your plans, and how do you see the next few years shaping up professionally?

THE BIG QUESTION!!! Haha, I do not know yet—that would be the most honest answer. I have a few ideas in mind that I want to explore, but right now, I feel that this collection has a lot more to say and a lot more to show, so I will keep working on that for a wee while. I can see myself somewhere by the sea developing new concepts and pieces, but I definitely need a break to rest and think more clearly.



Ale and Vica at the studio in Haldane Building (GSA),
filming the process of making

THE VIDEO

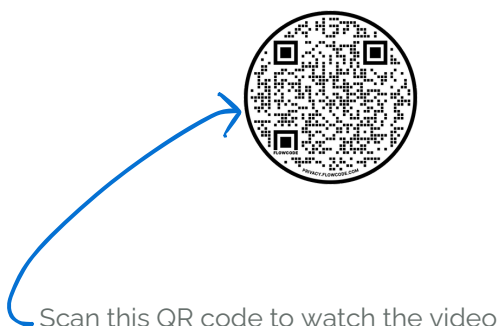


Screenshot from the video *Relakx*, featuring Persefoni Gerangelou and Adam Tompa. 2024

The video we recorded with two actors who read the text by Hazel Glass featured Persefoni Gerangelou and Adam Tompa. The video is a hybrid of installation video and exhibition text. Although the text narrates from one person's perspective, the actors read it as a dialogue without changing anything, allowing for a playful interpretation. The idea of recording this act on Zoom not only reflects our time but was a necessary solution as Persefoni is based in Athens and Adam is based in Glasgow. In the video, the actors pretend to be in one space, turning their heads when talking to each other. It represents a moment of intimate and abstract conversation.

Persefoni Gerangelou [@persefoni__gerangelou](https://www.instagram.com/persefoni__gerangelou)

Adam Tompa [@adam.tompa](https://www.instagram.com/adam.tompa)



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LYDIA HONEYBONE is an arts producer, curator and film programmer; their practice focuses on creating opportunities for the exhibition and production of film and artists' moving images, with a specific interest in intersectionality and community engagement. Conviviality is an important part of their work as co-director of Offline, a new gallery, cinema and studios complex in Govanhill. Their skills in the kitchen and passion for sustainable vegan food developed by cheffing at Glasgow Supper Club since 2016.

Whole Turmeric Roast Cauliflower **with** Whipped Tahini, Golden Sultanas and Almonds

INGREDIENTS (SERVES 4)

- 1 x large cauliflower
- 1 x heaped tsp turmeric powder + extra for dressing/glaze
- 1 x tbsp sunflower oil
- 4 x tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 x large clove of garlic (finely minced)
- 75g golden sultanas
- 1 x tsp agave
- 75g chopped almonds
- salt and pepper to taste
- 2 large lemon (juiced)
- 100ml tahini
- 100ml water



METHOD

- 1 Preheat oven to 180 degrees Celsius
- 2 Wash cauliflower and remove only the largest outer leaves
- 3 Mix sunflower oil, turmeric, salt and pepper and apply liberally to cauliflower
- 4 Roast for 40-60 minutes, until golden and softened through, a knife should slide through easily but cauliflower should retain some bite
- 5 While cauliflower is roasting prepare whipped tahini - to a blender add tahini, 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, water, half the lemon juice and a pinch of salt, blend - it should thicken quickly, becoming the texture of silky clotted cream
- 6 Prepare dressing - toast almonds, chop sultanas, mix with half a tsp turmeric, add agave, garlic, remaining lemon juice and extra virgin olive oil
- 7 Spread whipped tahini on serving dish, remove whole roasted cauliflower from oven and place on tahini, glaze with dressing - serve!

Apricot Glazed Savoury Butternut Squash Plait **Loaf**

An orange-coloured loaf to be torn and shared, dipped into sauces and shared with friends.

INGREDIENTS (MAKES ONE LARGE LOAF):

- 750g strong white bread flour
- 1 x medium butternut squash
- 1 x tablespoon sunflower oil
- salt to taste
- 250ml warm water (plus extra
100ml for glaze)
- 7g fast action yeast
- 50ml plant-based milk
- 10g salt
- 20g plant-based butter
- 20ml maple syrup
- 20ml extra virgin olive oil (plus extra
for greasing bread tin)
- 50g apricot jam



METHOD

- 1 Preheat the oven to 180 degrees Celsius
- 2 Peel, deseed and roughly cube (2.5cm squares) the butternut squash, rub with sunflower oil and salt, roast until caramelized, tossing every 20-30min (45min)
- 3 Once squash is roasted, transfer while still hot to a blender or liquidiser, add butter, pinch of salt, 10ml maple syrup, milk and blend until silky with no lumps remaining (add more milk as required)
- 4 To warm water add the yeast and leave for a couple of minutes until it begins to bubble, then mix with the roast squash puree to make a loose soupy consistency
- 5 Add salt, to flour and slowly add your squash and water mix to form a smooth dough, kneed for 5 minutes
- 6 Grease a clean bowl with olive oil and leave dough to rise for 1 hour under a clean damp tea towel
- 7 Knock back the dough by kneading again for 30 seconds, return to bowl and leave for a further 30 minutes
- 8 Remove dough from bowl and place onto oiled surface, roll into a long sausage 10cm wide
- 9 Divide into three even sections leaving section 2 and 3 connected, so you have one long piece and one shorter – take section 1 and place at the centre point of the longer piece of dough – plait the dough
- 10 Grease a bread tin or baking tray with oil and dust with flour, transfer the plaiter loaf to baking tray and cover with a damp tea towel to rise a third time (30min)
- 11 Melt the jam in 100ml of water, add 10ml maple syrup
- 12 Preheat oven to 200 degrees celsius
- 13 Brush loaf with jam glaze
- 14 Bake for 45 minutes, until golden

THE END, THE BEGINNING.