

The Observer  
**food**monthly  
June 2024 No 277



## Summer special!

◆ **Foodie holidays**

*Eat your way  
around the UK*

◆ **In the swim**

*Nigel Slater's  
seafood recipes*

◆ **Taste of Spain**

*José Pizarro's  
ultimate menu*

◆ **Roasting!**

*The Sunday  
lunch revival*

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## Summer special

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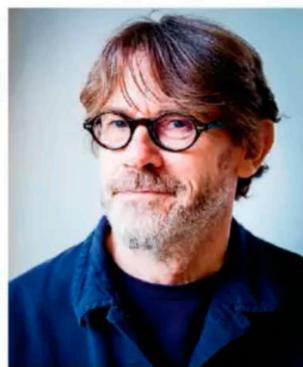
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Illustration  
Paul Thurlby



# Nigel Slater

Spanish recipes, memories of cooking in Ukraine – and our experts' holiday food tips

**T**his month's recipes are from José Pizarro: vibrant chicken sautéed with red peppers, sherry and anchovy; a summer pisto with golden manchego; and a strawberry creme caramel. He also tells us how the British understanding of Spanish food has changed since he set up his tiny and much-loved tapas bar in Bermondsey all those years ago.

We are in holiday mood and have been exploring Kent, the West Country, and Edinburgh and Fife for the best treats from cinnamon buns to char siu wonton noodles and wild garlic butter beans to raw scallops with blood orange. Our correspondents have found a shopping bag full of good places to eat, stay and drink. Read about the rise of Cornwall's new wave chefs, secret harbourside bistros in Edinburgh and wonderful vineyards in Kent.

Jay Rayner is in full election mode this month and reminds the incoming government

they must treat our food supply as a priority. Our farmers and food producers are hampered by a lack of available labour and crushed by the endless paperwork that has been brought about by the border checks as a result of Brexit. Any new government needs to put sorting out this mess at the very top of their to-do list.

We have a fascinating story from Viv Groskop, who tells us about the summer she learned to cook. "That year, I learned to cook Russian and Ukrainian dishes but I also learned a mish-mash of home cooks' favourite recipes from many of the former Soviet republics: pastes and flatbreads from Georgia, polenta (*mamaliga*) from Moldova, lamb casseroles and pilaf from Armenia. Some were cooked by friends or families who had 'adopted' me." We bring you a taster for her new book.

We also get an insight into Richard Bainbridge's nutritional yeast and we have Allan Mustafa's life on a plate. **OFM**



# MENABREA

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## The Happy Eater

# Jay Rayner

Why isn't feeding the nation a higher priority for a new government?

**J**ust before the election was called, news broke of Sue Gray's so-called "shit list": an inventory compiled by the Labour leader's chief of staff of the immediate challenges an incoming Labour government would face. They include the potential collapse of Thames Water, prison overcrowding and chronic-acute issues with the NHS. One challenge was notable for its absence: the very real risk of empty supermarket shelves. The fact is British agriculture is in crisis. Its absence from the list is not entirely surprising. Historically, Labour has been an urban party. At the 2019 election it won just three of the 100 most rural seats. It has never quite grasped the importance of agriculture and the food supply chain.

That said, the Tories won 96 of those 100 seats and have still made a bloody mess of it. The first challenge they will bequeath to Labour, should it win, involves untying the tangled knot around imports and exports. The confused introduction of hyper-bureaucratic and horrendously expensive border checks is the result of hardcore Brexit ideology. Boris Johnson could have negotiated alignment with the EU on food standards and animal welfare. Then we would simply be doing internal checks as before, and trade would flow freely.

But that would have stopped us doing terrible deals with other countries of the sort the EU would not allow. It's why many UK products are now marked "Not for EU". It isn't that they don't currently comply with EU standards;



it's that theoretically they may not. If an incoming Labour government negotiated alignment on food standards, huge costs and bureaucracy would be stripped out of food production. Imports could flow. With our self-sufficiency at just 60% and falling, that would be a very good thing.

Farming is not like other sectors. It's both extremely risky and absolutely vital. It should be classed as a public good. Underpinning the 1957 treaty of Rome, the foundation of the whole European project, was an understanding that Europe had been ravaged by war for the previous century and that making sure everyone was properly fed would contribute massively

**Farming is both extremely risky and absolutely vital**

**Illustration**  
Sarah Tanat-Jones

to peace and stability. That led in turn to the common agricultural policy (CAP) and subsidy by land ownership. It's not contradictory to believe in the EU but recognise the CAP was in dire need of reform. Subsidy by acreage ended up paying some landowners not to farm.

**T**he Conservatives have been withdrawing that subsidy and replacing it with a system that essentially rewards only environmental good. Of course, looking after the environment is vital, but the new system means you can make more money from, say, sowing wild flowers rather than growing crops. Labour has made encouraging noises about the need to support food production, but it generally comes down to a commitment to public bodies buying British ingredients. British agriculture needs to have the risk of the job done on our behalf properly underwritten, either by a government-backed insurance scheme or some form of more focused subsidy.

After months of terrible weather and industry challenges, farmers are talking about quitting. The unmitigated market will not keep us fed, however much the neo-liberal headbangers want to pretend otherwise. In 2017, I interviewed Ian Wright, the then director general of the Food and Drink Federation. "If you can't feed a country," he said, "you haven't got a country." Labour could do far worse than put that slogan right at the very top of Gray's shit list. **OFM**  
jay.rayner@observer.co.uk

INTERVIEW HOLLY O'NEILL, GETTY IMAGES



**My secret ingredient**

**Richard Bainbridge's nutritional yeast**



I've recently found out about nutritional yeast and it's kind of blown my mind. It has all these savoury flavours; you can sprinkle it on even the most basic salad and it gives an amazing umami finish. It's a

brilliant seasoning, even over roast potatoes.

It has an almost salty finish, like parmesan, so you can use it as a substitute. I've made a vegan mac and cheese for the restaurant – incredible, a unique

depth of flavour.

My pastry chef told me to try it on popcorn – we have it for movie night and my kids love it. Once the corn has popped, we add a little oil and sprinkle over the nutritional yeast. Talk about a flavour explosion.

I also use it in vegan ranch dressing. I make a raw cashew cream, then I put in lemon juice, garlic, onion, a bit of dill, sea salt and nutritional yeast, and I blend it all up. We have it as a dip in summer with crudites, or

use it to dress salads. That's my favourite thing to do with it, and my girls absolutely love it.  
*Richard Bainbridge is chef-patron of Benedicts in Norwich; restaurant benedicts.com*

Interview  
*Tim Lewis*

Photograph  
*Perou*

# My life on a plate

*Allan Mustafa*

Actor and comedian, 38

**I've always been into food.** Because food was so prominent in my household: my dad's Kurdish, my mum's Czech, but my mum spent 15 years living in Baghdad before I was born, so she's an expert on both sides. She'd always be cooking: a simpler dish would be a goulash with dumplings, or, from the Kurdish side, a lamb stew either with okra or potatoes or beans. I was spoiled.

**I used to be a little bit ashamed of being a foreigner** and not feeling like everyone else. When my friends were coming over, I'd be like: "Don't show them sauerkraut, they'll think it's weird." And I smoked lots of weed, so I just wanted to eat pizzas and frankfurters, like freezer meals and shit.

**My dad passed away about 12 years ago** and I started thinking that I needed to connect with this side of my family. Yeah, I'm from London, and I'm proud of that. But I want to know my roots as well. I didn't understand what Kurdistan was. And food is just an amazing vehicle to learn about these things.

**Taste Cadets [Mustafa's YouTube and Instagram food and travel show made with his friends Kieran Cavanagh and Marcus Adams] is a passion project.** We started in 2017 when I was making [the Bafta award-winning mockumentary] *People Just Do Nothing*. But I didn't want to walk into an office and go: "Can me and two of my mates that have never been on telly get paid to travel the world?" So we created our own videos.

**Anthony Bourdain is a creative moral compass.** There's nothing wrong with being an influencer or whatever, but we didn't want to take *Taste Cadets* down that path. I wanted to create a documentary, as opposed to a staged food show. But if we've influenced someone, if you've had a great time off the back of our great time, then that's great.

**It's a dirty little secret of *Taste Cadets*** that I don't eat any fish or seafood. And I hate telling people that because then they assume that I just like chips and beans. I used to eat fish as a kid, so it's a mental thing. It's not the fishes' fault, it's mine.

**I really geek out on being able to eat history.** An obvious example would be bánh mì in Vietnam. Colonisation is fucked, but there's some things that are left over and made better than just putting a bit of ham in a baguette. Nothing wrong with a beautiful jambon-beurre, but just improving it and using survivalism and resilience.

**We filmed the *People Just Do Nothing* movie in Japan.** That was an eye-opener on their food scene. I even tried some sushi and I didn't die, I didn't faint or throw up.

**I do fantasise about doing a Marvel movie or something.** One day, if I do a big movie, they'll have to get me a trainer and they'll feed me food through a drip, and it will be fine. **OFM**

## My favourite things

### Food

*Kifte, which are Kurdish stuffed rice meatballs with lamb mince inside. That's one of my death row meals*

### Drink

*A really well done mezcal margarita. Sour and spicy drinks are my bag more than sweet*

### Place to eat

*Nandine in Camberwell, south London. Chef Auntie Pary escaped Saddam's regime via Kurdistan, so she cooks regional Kurdish dishes as well as the classics*

*The new series of Peacock starts on BBC Three and iPlayer on 17 June*



*'I want to know my Kurdish roots – food is an amazing vehicle for learning'*

Lunch with

# Isabella Tree

*Rewilding will be vital to the UK's agricultural future, the author and farmer tells* **Tim Adams**

**A**t lunch in Hove, a block back from the seafront, on the first summery day of the year, Isabella Tree is explaining the phrase that best describes her work: “Don’t just do something, stand there.”

The phrase captures the philosophy behind rewilding, the movement that the happily named Tree has done so much to pioneer, with her husband, Charlie Burrell, on the 1,400 acres of land they own at Knepp in Sussex. The essence of their project has been to undo the damage of decades of intensive farming by working with the environment, rather than against it.

In 2001, with mounting debts, falling subsidies and thinning soils, the couple cashed in their tractors and harvesters and dairy herd and milk quota, and did something different: they let loose wild Exmoor ponies and Longhorn cattle and Tamworth pigs on their estate and then stood back, watching and waiting.

The result of that inaction was nothing short of revolutionary. In her bestselling 2018 book, *Wilding*, Tree described how the animals transformed the soil, and how the soil transformed the whole ecology. Very quickly the farm became colonised by an extraordinary diversity of plants and insects, bats and other small mammals, attracted to the scrubland and water meadows and wood pasture that re-formed on previously ploughed and pesticided fields. Nightingales and turtle doves, whose numbers have declined catastrophically, thrived; a colony of storks has been established. The magic of that transformation is now captured in a documentary made by David Allen, whose award-winning films most recently include *The Serengeti Rules*, which explored remote and untouched ecologies. The remarkable thing about Allen’s Knepp film is that it seems like a natural next chapter of that project, filmed a few miles from the A23 and Brighton.



**Illustration**  
*Lyndon Hayes*

Tree was a travel writer before she was a rewilder, author of books about Papua New Guinea and Kathmandu, and she gives the bright-eyed impression, at 60, of having found a way to bring all of that adventuring spirit home. She has chosen to have lunch, appropriately, at a restaurant called Wild Flor, which advertises the local provenance of its menu on a blackboard: “Fruit and vegetables: George’s allotment, Alison’s foraging; whole beast local meat and game: Calcot Farm, Ashurst”, and so on. As we make our way through a fabulous, seasonal three-course lunch, she relives some of the challenges of Knepp that are recreated in the film.

Some of those obstacles have not gone away; government, lobbied hard

by agribusiness and the conglomerate food industry, remains at best agnostic about the possibilities of wilding, and licences have been hard to come by. (“They talk about food security,” she says, “but if they really cared about it, they would do something about the third of food that is wasted each year.”)

Local barriers have proved a little easier to negotiate. To begin with, some of the farms that bordered the Knepp land were hostile to the idea of nature taking its course, fearful of the spread of ragwort and other pernicious weeds. Slowly, many have been won over.

Tree suggests you can measure that progress in dung beetles. A recent study showed that even compared to a nearby organic livestock farm, Knepp supports something like 30 times as



## Insects, bats and other small mammals quickly colonised the farm

many dung beetles. And the key thing is this: because the livestock at Knepp do not overwinter inside, the beetles are present in large numbers all year. When the cattle at neighbouring farms return to pasture, the insects are primed to spread out and colonise.

Another success is the significant rise in local bird populations, which means there is far less need locally for insecticides; the recreation of natural river meanders and the introduction of beavers on the estate offers age-old lessons in flood management. Counterintuitively, Tree suggests, the estate is also making money. Because overheads are so much lower, their beef, pork and venison turn a profit; farm buildings can be rented out to small businesses; and there is a growing

wilderness-safari market. Their hope is to create corridors and networks of wilded land across the country, making farming sustainable.

“The way we see it,” she says, “is that you need that rewilding to build a sustainable future for agriculture ... Rewilding can provide the life-support systems for regenerative farms. It can help you restore your water tables, put an end to the nitrates and chemicals that pollute our rivers day in and day out much more than human sewage.”

**I**n some ways, it feels as though Tree was born to this somewhat fairytale life. She was adopted as a child by aristocratic parents – her mother was Lady Anne Tree, daughter of the Duke of Devonshire, and a noted prison reformer and plant hunter. She grew up at Shute House – where Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe created a famous garden at her parents’ instruction – with a lot of freedom. “My parents’ idea of bringing up children,” she says, “was benign neglect. I had my spaniel and my Chopper bike and cycled miles to meet friends and make dens and light campfires.” Given the fact that her mother’s idea of landscape design was to recreate the Shalimar gardens in Kashmir, I wonder what she would have made of Tree’s approach – tipping 400 tons of crushed brick on to the croquet lawn, for example (“nature doesn’t like flat lawns”) – to change what was a “biodiversity desert”?

“My mother died in 2010 so she saw the beginning of our rewilding, but I would love to see her reaction to the garden as it looks now.”

Talking to Tree it is hard not to be pollinated by her cheerful enthusiasm, which is backed up by years of hands-on research. She and her husband were never natural evangelists but she has, it seems to me, become a rare purveyor of genuine hope in a depleted environment.

As we get to our puddings, she talks me through some of the ways in which their ideas are quietly taking hold, without a government minister in sight. The Help Our Kelp project, for example, off the coast here, which is aiming to restore the diversity of the seabed and save the livelihoods



**Wild Flor**  
42 Church  
Road, Hove  
BN3 2FN  
Tel 01273  
329111

### They ate

**Isabella ate**  
*Grilled pak choi tops, yoghurt and guanciale; fish soup, rouille and garlic croutons; woodruff custard, hazelnut and apricot*

**Tim ate**  
*Nettle soup, chilli and smoked almond; mutton morteau, coco beans, raisin and chard; prune cake, earl grey ice-cream*

*(both ate from the three-course spring set menu, £28)*

**They shared**  
*Sourdough and butter, £2*

### They drank

**Both drank**  
*Rhubarb fizz cocktail, £13 each*

of small fishing boats. Or the Weald to Waves programme, which is pushing to create a wildlife corridor 100 miles long from Knepp to the Ashdown Forest, a model for what might be possible country-wide.

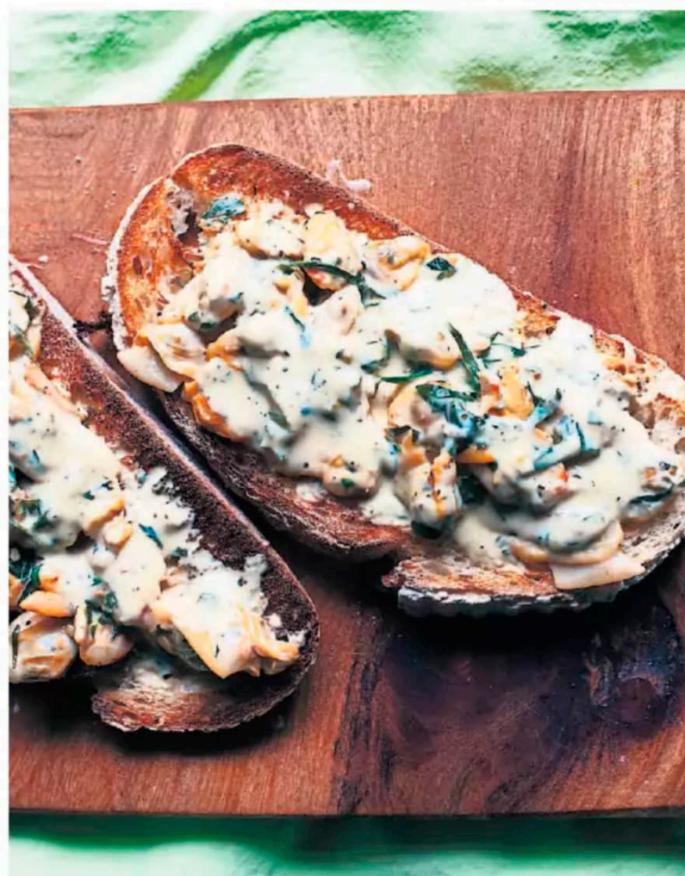
That latter idea, like all the best ones, evolved organically. In lockdown, she and Charlie got a call from a local farmer called James Baird, who had read Tree’s book, and came to see for himself the health of the cattle at Knepp. He was a convert. He told them “at the end of the book you said your dream is to connect Knepp in a corridor with the sea – well, I own that land between Brighton and Bognor, so let’s do it”. And then, she says: “Ashdown Forest said, ‘Can we join you?’ So we said, OK, sure. And then the people who look after the River Arun said: ‘Why are you concentrating on the River Adur, not us?’ And then the Ouse said: ‘You’ve got to have us too.’” The dots are now nearly all joined up. “There will be a few gaps,” she says, “but, basically, you will be getting wildlife flowing through river catchments, restoring floodplains. And what’s become wonderful about this project is it’s now run by a charity set up so anyone can join in. If your property is on that notional corridor, or if you are looking after the local churchyard say, you can be a part of it.”

“Like the opposite of HS2?” I suggest “Exactly like that,” she says. **OFM** *Wilding, based on Isabella Tree’s bestselling book, is in UK cinemas now*

# Fresh start

*Fuss-free seafood recipes from Nigel Slater: grilled sardine buns, halibut with basil butter, baked haddock, peppers, lemon and mint*

Photographs  
*Jonathan Lovekin*



**W**hen I find beautiful, sparkling fresh fish, I treat it simply, preferring to grill it with a soft herb butter, make a fish sandwich with a soft bap or simply bake it with seasonal vegetables. For seafood, maybe a little cream and herb sauce, but the point is to let the fish and seafood be the star of the show. The less fuss the better, letting its freshness shine through.

Recently, I picked up Scottish haddock and Cornish hake in pristine condition at my local fishmongers and rushed them home for a simple supper. The thick steaks of hake were baked with a sweet-sharp dressing; a bag of cockles were steamed briefly, then tossed with cream, mustard and tarragon; haddock was roasted with tomatoes and peppers. Some fine and rather special halibut ended up with a verdant basil butter.

These recipes celebrate our own fish and seafood, but choosing carefully, looking out for other sustainable choices, it is easy to make substitutions to the fish and seafood suggested here.

*Left, cockles, cider, creme fraiche, see page 12. Right, grilled sardine 'nduja bun*





### Grilled sardine 'nduja bun

Ask for sardine fillets, otherwise you have to bone them. If you can only buy whole, cleaned fish, then cut off their heads, open the fish flat and cut out the backbone with a small, very sharp knife. It's a messy task, but strangely satisfying.

*Makes 4 buns*

*For the butter*

**butter** 90g

**soft 'nduja** 150g

**thyme leaves** 1 tbsp

*For the sardines*

**sardines** 8, boned and butterflied

**soft buns** 4

#### ► *Directions*

Put the butter in a mixing bowl and beat with a wooden spoon until soft. Add the 'nduja and mash with the butter. Stir in the thyme leaves and set aside.

For the sardines, line a grill pan or baking sheet with foil. Get an overhead (oven) grill hot, place the fish skin-side up on the foil and sprinkle lightly with oil. (There is no need to season, the butter will do that for you.) Cook under the overhead grill for about 6-7 minutes, then slide a palette knife under each one, turn over and cook the other side for a minute or two.

Split the buns in half and spread thickly with the 'nduja butter. Place a hot sardine or two on each bun. Sandwich them together, letting the butter melt into the bun. »

### Baked hake, sweet and sour dressing

I love this dish, with its sweet-sour onion accompaniment. If you can't locate thick steaks of hake, the recipe will work with other fish too. It is wonderful with salmon. Some new potatoes would be a fine accompaniment.

*Serves 4*

*For the dressing*

**onion** 1, medium

**olive oil** 4 tbsp

**garlic** 1 clove, crushed

**white wine vinegar** 125ml

**water** 50ml

**caster sugar** 2 tbsp

**golden raisins** 2 tbsp

**peppercorns** 8

*For the fish*

**hake steaks** 4 x 250g pieces

**plain flour** a little

**olive oil** 4 tbsp

**parsley** 2 tbsp

#### ◆ *Directions*

Peel and finely slice the onion into rings. Warm the olive oil in a shallow ovenproof pan (it will go into the oven later). Add the onion and fry gently over a low to moderate heat until it has softened but not coloured – 10 minutes or so. Stir in the crushed garlic, vinegar, water, caster sugar, raisins, peppercorns and ½ a

**Soft, sweet  
cockles,  
creamy sauce,  
thick toast are  
a real treat**

teaspoon of salt, bring back to the boil and simmer for 5 minutes. Set the oven at 180C fan/gas mark 6.

Season the fish with salt and pepper, and flour each piece lightly. In a second pan, warm the olive oil then lower the fish into the oil and cook for 5-6 minutes on each side till it is light golden in colour. Spoon the oil over the fish as it cooks, then transfer to the pan with the onions and their dressing. Cover the pan with tin foil.

Bake for 12-15 minutes until the fish is cooked through. Finely chop the parsley and scatter over the onions and fish, then transfer to plates.

### Cockles, cider, creme fraiche

Soft, sweet cockles, creamy sauce, thick toast. A treat for a light weekend supper.

*Enough for 2*

**cockles in their shells** 1kg

**dryish cider** 250ml

**tarragon leaves** 3 tbsp

**thick slices of bread** 2, for toasting

**creme fraiche** 150g

**dijon mustard** 1 tsp

#### ◆ *Directions*

Wash the cockles, throwing out any that are very heavy and probably full of sand or have broken shells.

Warm the cider in a deep, non-reactive pan. Tip in the cockles, close with a tight lid, and let them bubble for about 4 minutes, until the shells start to open. Remove the cockles with a large draining spoon, then pick the meat from the shells. It might appear to be an uphill task until you start, then you'll get into an easy rhythm.

Finely chop the tarragon. Toast the slices of bread.

Stir the creme fraiche and the tarragon into the bubbling cider and cockle juices, season with black pepper and the mustard (no salt), and reduce for a couple of minutes over a high heat, then return the cockle flesh to the pan. Spoon on to the slices of hot toast, letting the sauce soak in.



*Left, baked hake, sweet and sour dressing. Right, grilled halibut, basil butter*





## Grilled halibut, basil butter

A quick recipe, with a deeply fragrant butter that can be used for many other things. Keep any that is left over in the fridge for another day.

*Serves 2*

**halibut steaks** 2 x 250g pieces

*For the basil butter*

**butter** 70g, at room temperature

**basil leaves** 20g

**lemon** 1, small

*For the cucumber salad*

**cucumber** ½

**white wine vinegar** 2 tbsp

**olive oil** 4 tbsp

**green peppercorns in brine** 1 tsp

**parsley** a small bunch

### ◆ *Directions*

For the basil butter, cream the butter until soft with a wooden spoon. Shred the basil and mash to a puree with a pinch of sea salt. (Use a pestle or the back of a spoon.) Stir into the butter. Finely grate the lemon zest, stir in, then set aside.

To make the salad, peel the cucumber and cut it in half lengthways. Scoop out the core and seeds with a teaspoon, then cut the flesh into thickish slices. Make the dressing by mixing together the vinegar and oil. Chop the green peppercorns and add to the dressing with 1 teaspoon of their brine. Finely chop the parsley and add to the cucumber. Pour the dressing over the cucumber and set aside for at least 20 minutes.

Heat an overhead grill. Place the fish on a grill pan or baking sheet and spread with some of the basil butter. Let the fish cook under the grill until nicely browned on top, about 8 minutes depending on how hot your grill is.

Brush once again with the remaining butter and eat with the cucumber salad. >>



Above, baked haddock, peppers, lemon, mint

### Baked haddock, peppers, lemon, mint

Bright, sun-baked flavours here. Let the peppers and tomatoes get properly softened by the heat, even a little scorched here and there.

Serves 4  
romano peppers 2  
yellow or orange peppers 2

cherry tomatoes 400g  
garlic 2 cloves  
olive oil 6 tbsp  
lemon 1  
haddock fillets 4 x 250g pieces  
olive oil 3 tbsp  
mint leaves a small handful

► **Directions**  
Cut each of the romano peppers in half lengthways, discard the seeds and core, then slice each half into

Let the peppers and tomatoes get a little scorched here and there

four. Do the same with the yellow peppers then put them all in a roasting tin.

Set the oven at 180C fan/gas mark 6. Halve the cherry tomatoes, scatter them among the peppers and season generously with salt and pepper. Peel the garlic, flatten with a knife and add to the roasting tin, tucking them in among the peppers. Pour in the olive oil. Cut the lemon into large pieces and add to the pan.

Bake for about 50 minutes till the peppers are patchily browned and the tomatoes have split and their juices are collecting in the bottom of the pan.

While the peppers roast, heat a thin layer of olive oil in a non-stick pan, then, when it is quite hot, season the fish and place it skin-side up in the hot oil. Leave for 3 or 4 minutes until the underside is lightly browned, then slide a palette knife under each piece and gently flip them over. Let the skin lightly brown for a couple of minutes, keeping the heat fairly high. Lift the fish out and place among the roasted peppers. Scatter the mint leaves over the fish and tomatoes, then, tilting the pan, spoon some of the roasting juices over the fish and continue to roast for 7-10 minutes.

Lift out and serve with the peppers, tomatoes and juices. **OFM** @NigelSlater

The Observer aims to publish recipes using fish rated as sustainable by the Marine Conservation Society's Good Fish Guide



It's like evening wear  
for water

ADD A DASH OF  
Extraordinary 



# *You've reached your*

*Curry tasting in Fife, oysters on Exmoor, wine tours in Kent: expert tips on the best food and drink in some of Britain's summer holiday hotspots*



# *destination...*

Illustration  
*Paul Thurlby*



**Glebe House**

Sustainable Italian food in Devon; its lemon and elderflower tart, below.



**West Country**

**G**lastonbury was crying out for more food venues but we had to exercise caution," says Ayesha Kalaji who runs Queen of Cups, a contemporary Middle Eastern restaurant in the heart of the boho Somerset town. "The restaurant had to be accessible to everyone as community is so important to the people here."

Kalaji's cooking is inspired by her Jordanian roots, as much as her background in Michelin-starred restaurants and OFM favourites the Palomar and Bubala, but Queen of Cups's appeal goes way beyond the food. Kalaji has kept the 17th-century pub's much-loved Sunday music sessions and the town's "Queer Cabaret" night. "Glastonbury is quirky – we have a town wizard – but we are comfortable in our skin," she says. "We may not be as well known as the bigger culinary towns, but we are hot on their heels, crystals and tie-dye in tow."

Somerset has become a hotspot in recent years, thanks to high-profile openings such as Osip in

Bruton and Three Horseshoes in Batcombe. Yet there are still plenty of lesser-known gems in the region, including the High Pavement in Frome, which started life as a supper club and has grown into a full-blown Moorish tapas restaurant, jealously guarded by locals. Run by Stuart Bastiman and Aimee Snell, it's on the ground floor of their family townhouse in Frome's artisan quarter. Bastiman cut his teeth at Moro and his food follows a similar Spanish and North African influence.

One of the most notable new openings in Somerset is the Kitchen, an oyster and seafood restaurant in the heart of the Exmoor national park. It's owned

by Porlock Bay Oysters, which carries on a century-old tradition of oyster farming in the area. Chef Merrick Webber has created a menu of simple seafood tapas dishes with oysters served with a variety of dressings. Bestsellers include deep-fried oyster with wasabi mayo, ginger and sesame.

Tim Blanchard has opened his

own place after earning his stripes in London, where he worked at St John and Sabor before heading west to Mitch Tonks's Dartmouth flagship the Seahorse. He has recently taken over the Church House Inn, a 13th-century pub at Harberton near Totnes in Devon. There's rabbit stew and devilled shrimps on toast, and bar snacks include egg and cress sandwiches to help soak up local real ale and cider. "It's hearty cooking that does not distract from the reason people head to the pub in the first place," says Blanchard. "What we are building is not just a restaurant but a local meeting place that just happens to serve the best steak and kidney pudding in the south-west."

Glebe House is a restaurant with rooms set within a bucolic 15-acre smallholding in Colyton, east Devon, run by Hugo and Olive Guest who bought the former Georgian vicarage from Hugo's parents. Its Italian-influenced food is conjured from ingredients either grown on site or sourced



**The Parlour**

Plot to plate is the name of the game at Bredy Farm's restaurant.

PHOTOGRAPHS: KAREN ROBINSON; HARRY BORDEN



### Ayesha Kalaji

A taste of the Middle East at Queen of Cups in Glastonbury.

from the immediate area. The couple introduced food workshops and events, including a mackerel fishing day that culminates with a twilight dinner on the beach.

There is a similar plot-to-plate philosophy at the Parlour on Bredy Farm near the Dorset village of **Burton Bradstock**. In the same family since 1949, the farm was a dairy operation but since diversification, it has been home to a beef herd, sheep, a campsite, music venue and restaurant serving Italian food and Sunday roasts, using meat and vegetables from the farm.

“Our ethos is local where possible but quality is paramount,” says head chef Simon Payne. “We also host feasting events where everyone sits and shares big platters at long tables. It might be aubergine involtini or a whole suckling pig.”

There is a new wave of chefs emerging in **Cornwall**, sitting alongside more established names such as Nathan Outlaw, Emily Scott, Paul Ainsworth and, of

course, Rick Stein. Philippines-born, self-taught Ana Marie Morales moved to Cornwall when she was 10 and last year opened Ana’s Kusina, a tiny cafe in **Wadebridge**, a 10-minute drive from Padstow. “I wanted to use my heritage to cook Asian flavours with Cornish produce,” says Morales. “I get Cornish wagyu from Tintagel and seafood from Newlyn. I also make Filipino ice-cream with local clotted cream.”

One of the most sought-after tables in the county is in an old stable yard within the Trelowarren Estate on the **Lizard Peninsula**. Flora is run by chef Tim Spedding and partner Louise Roedkjaer who moved to Cornwall, where Tim had started his career, in 2017. After Spedding’s stints at celebrated London spots, including the Ledbury in Notting Hill, the duo returned via a spell at the acclaimed Coombeshead Farm and local pop-ups before setting up Flora.

“Flora is all the things we love to make and do,” says Spedding. “We grow our own vegetables,

### North St Kitchen

The owners buy seafood directly from the boats in Fowey and Looe.



### SIX OF THE BEST

**Goujons of local fish, fries, tartare**  
Beach House, South Milton, Devon

**Wild garlic butter beans, cavolo nero, ewe’s curd**  
Root, Wells, Somerset

**Mortadella, Cornish gouda and green tomato chutney sandwich**  
North Street Kitchen, Fowey, Cornwall

**Lyme bay scallop crudo, blood orange and chilli**  
Glebe House, Colyton, Devon

**Braised Bredy Farm mutton shoulder and cannellini beans**  
The Parlour, Burton Bradstock, Dorset

**Boiled pork dumplings, garlic shrimp chilli oil, black vinegar**  
Ana’s Kusina, Wadebridge, Cornwall

herbs, fruits and flowers. The Lizard always felt very remote but Trelowarren is that rare thing in Cornwall – it’s unspoilt and not over commercialised.”

For what is their first business venture, Ethan Friskney-Bryer and wife Hazel took over North Street Kitchen in **Fowey** in March 2023. The restaurant is in an old boat shed overlooking the river. “We have a small walled garden on a nearby farm where we grow some of our own produce,” says Friskney-Bryer. “We also buy directly from boats fishing out of Fowey and Looe, which means we get to pay fishermen a good price for their catch and keep the cost down for customers.”

It’s a similar story at Argoe, a small seafood shack on the quayside next to **Newlyn’s** fish market. Started by Rich Adams, who grew up working in his family’s wholesale fish business, with friends Kara Alcorn and chef Ben Coombs (ex-Rochelle Canteen), the menu showcases locally landed fish cooked over wood and charcoal, often utilising less fashionable species.

Adams says: “Fish like scad [horse mackerel], megrim and flounder are on the menu, alongside more luxury choices like turbot, lemon sole and lobster. This ensures the entirety of our fishermen’s catch ends up on plates, rather than used for crab bait or wasted.” **MARK TAYLOR** >>



### Hobz

Matthew Mallia with some of the excellent cakes and pastries he sells.

breakfast: murtabak, a rich roti envelope stuffed with onion, egg and local haggis, plus a helping of flaky roti canai paired with bowls of curry sauce and acar pickles. Qureshi-Smith is half-Singaporean and travels there “every year to get more ideas”. The Coffee House’s surging popularity means he needs help as it’s not just breakfast that is served but laksa lunches plus the odd supper night. “I’m keen to hire another cook this summer to do more dinners,” he told me from behind billowing steam. The cafe’s appeal goes deeper than its food: it’s a welcome slice of Singapore in the chilly Scottish capital.

Visitors unsure of where to dine in Edinburgh should simply wander down Leith Walk, where I stopped at Mirin, another new-ish owner-operated spot serving dumplings stuffed with mallard and ’nduja, sliders filled with pork and pickled daikon, and a pleasurable dish whose deliciousness lingers in the memory: an instantly cheering chilli crunch noodles with parmesan cheese.

Further down the walk is Hobz, a cafe-bakery that opens at the accommodating hour of 7.30am on weekdays and is run by Matthew Mallia who came from Malta where *hobz* means bread. He mills Scottish grain in-house for his loaves, although he confesses his bestseller is the cardamom croissant

### Mirin

A tuna bao from its menu which includes dumplings, sliders and noodles.



PHOTOGRAPHS: MURDO MACLEOD



bun (“it’s very buttery and full of freshly ground cardamom, and usually it sells out an hour after opening”). It is a charming spot, full of camaraderie and with inviting benches outside to rest your feet.

If it’s tops off and sandals weather, then beachfront **Portobello** calls. For years, I’ve been going to the Beach House for its goat’s cheese and beetroot toastie, hospitality and sublime, uninterrupted sea views. Its bakery and deli are nearby, on the high street, selling jars of kimchi and slaw from Edinburgh-based Aye Pickled and honey from the Scottish Bee Company, whose pots are stickered with accolades from the Great Taste awards.

If I’m in Portobello, I’ll hang about until it’s a respectable hour to walk into Smith & Gertrude wine bar and shop, where the art of eating is about ordering a plate of white anchovies, another of

## Edinburgh & Fife

**E**ighteen months ago, on the sort of November day that makes summer seem an impossible dream, I spotted a sign going up on the front of a building in Canonmills, **Edinburgh**. Its words – Singapore Coffee House – seemed hopeful, so I knew where to start when, more recently, I spent some time exploring the culinary terrain around Edinburgh and Fife, ahead of the peak summer crowds.

Chef Dylan Qureshi-Smith was behind the Coffee House’s tiny counter as I nabbed the last of the four tables. I ordered



### Beach House

Spectacular sea views and top toasties at this Portobello institution.



### Anstruther Fish Bar

Keeping Fife customers happy with its excellent, traditional fish and chip suppers.

east coast cured salami with garlic and red wine, and pairing it with a bottle of exceptional, amber-hued Georgian rkatsitelil. Go and you'll be treated like a regular by your second visit.

Another day, I take my appetite over the Firth of Forth to **Fife** and what might be the most uplifting restaurant in Scotland. Dhoom is in **Dunfermline** and, to keep

things fresh, chef-proprietor Dhaneshwar Prasad undertakes regular research trips to different Indian states. "Hiring a driver, and sometimes a local guide, we'll eat in the really small places, the places that open at 5am," he says. Every six months the menu changes, reflecting his travels. Tucking into the 10-course Mumbai taster menu, priced at a

very reasonable £27.95, there are chickpea *kotlets* (patties) inspired by Mumbai's Parsi cafés, and a sweetcorn chaat inspired by the Wankhede cricket stadium in Mumbai, but best of all is the fragrant Sichuan fish-fry curry. Last year Prasad and his team won the Scottish Curry award for most wanted restaurant of the year, which is no surprise. Everything at Dhoom tastes of greatness.

The Dory Bistro & Gallery is a harbourside restaurant in the fishing village of **Pittenweem** run by chef Ruth Robinson and her partner, maritime artist Malcolm Cheape, who shared a vision. "For the 25 years we lived here, there wasn't a proper seafood restaurant until we opened in 2018," says Robinson. "If this was Cornwall, they'd be stacked on top of one another. It just didn't make sense." When Robinson left academia, they bought the building, a former shop, transforming it into a superb restaurant that is moderately priced and altogether satisfying. The Pittenweem surf clams in white wine with lardons, and the hake with mussels were both excellent but you can't go wrong. Everything is carefully cooked and has integrity, with lobsters, langoustines and crabs all locally landed.

**St Andrews** is only 10 miles away but as it is late afternoon I arrive at the famous family baker Fisher and Donaldson just as they are closing ("we're all out of fudge doughnuts I'm afraid" – a classic that locals queue for). Instead, I grab a teacake to take home which, toasted later on, proved itself light and close to perfection. Finally, I head to Dune, a new cocktail loft bar from chef and restaurateur Dean Banks of Haar fame. I settle in for a plate of gougères (cheese puffs), filled with St Andrews cheddar, and a Toasty Shack negroni topped with a matching cheese tuile. **CAROLINE EDEN**

Caroline Eden's latest book *Cold Kitchen: a Year of Culinary Journeys* (Bloomsbury, £18.99). To buy a copy for £16.71, go to [guardianbookshop.com](http://guardianbookshop.com)

## SIX OF THE BEST

### All-day morning roll

*The Beach House, 57 Bath St, Portobello, Edinburgh*

### Homemade sausage rolls

*Smith & Gertrude, 254 Portobello High St, Portobello, Edinburgh*

### Haddock and chips

*Anstruther Fish Bar, Anstruther, Fife*

### Char sui wanton noodles

*Singapore Coffee House, 5 Canonmills, Edinburgh*

### Scottish tablet sundae

*The Perfect Scoop, 23 Main St, East Wemyss, Kirkcaldy*

### Roast potatoes, capers, pickled onions, raclette and mozzarella toastie

*Hobz, 106 Leith Walk, Edinburgh*

### Sargasso

A popular Margate spot for wine and small plates plus views of the harbour.



reservation to enjoy Smith's clever menus at Fordwich Arms in **Fordwich**, but if you don't have one at the Bridge Arms, which has a large garden and a focus on local ingredients cooked over charcoal, you can order oysters and cheddar beignets from the bar menu and know that the Michelin-level of accomplishment extends to the snacks.

Back round the corner, you don't need a room reservation to experience the Kent outpost of the hotel group the Pig. Drive up on a nice weekend, head towards the kitchen garden and check to see if the oven is in action, firing pizza topped with spring onions picked just metres away. Inside, the dining room offers a menu sourced from within a 25-mile radius, a true regional showcase.

In the shadow of **Canterbury** cathedral is Corkk, a wine shop and bar specialising in English wine, with a strong showing from local vineyards. Want a classic sparkling? Enthusiastic staff will tell you that Kent shares the same chalky ground as Champagne, and that Tattinger has invested in nearby vineyards. Show an interest in low-intervention wine? They'll pour you a taster from Westwell's thrilling bottles, left over from the night before because that was the subject of the fortnightly tasting. Head to the enomatic machines and do your own tasting. Book

almost too idyllic scenes of sheep grazing by stone bridges; fields rolling past train windows – the garden of England in full bloom and filled with food discoveries.

**Tip:** always follow a road leading to a cluster of businesses behind a field. You might end up at Gilda bakery in **Bishopsbourne**, with the best bun in the UK and a chocolate Basque cheesecake on the counter that's a link to San Sebastián, home to owner Jon Warren for 14 years. Three years ago, he moved back with his family to Kent, where he grew up, and noticed a change. "When I left, the food scene was in its infancy," he says. Apart from all the vineyards popping up, he noticed the quality in restaurants. "Before, there was Read's in Faversham and the Sportsman at Seasalter – now there are so many places."

Many of those places serve Gilda bread and, in turn, Warren supports local producers – the jambon croissant is filled with ham from Fern & Farrow next door and cheese from the Cheesemakers of Canterbury. "I've always been passion-led," says Warren, who started baking from home, giving loaves to the neighbours. Here, along the winding roads near Canterbury, his neighbours include Michelin-starred restaurants.

About a mile away, in the village of **Bridge**, is one of Daniel Smith's two Michelin-starred restaurants, the Bridge Arms. You'll need a

## Kent

**T**he Kent coast has had a boost over the past decade, with new arrivals and new restaurants adding to its foodie credentials. In **Whitstable**, the all-seafood menu at the family-run Wheelers Oyster Bar is a stalwart. In **Margate**, your cooler friends will take you to Bottega Caruso for silky pasta, Sargasso on the harbour for breezy wine and small plates, or Dive for margaritas and crab tostadas.

There's plenty of choice for families at **Folkestone** Harbour Arm, with a street-food stalls and deckchair cinema, ocean-front coffee roaster, lighthouse champagne bar, plus beach bars and restaurants with sea views. A walk up the hill is rewarded with a serene lunch at Folkestone Wine Company, and a justly lauded creme brulee. **Deal** boasts a long beach, pier cafe, midweek set lunch and seaweed martini at the Rose hotel, and Japanese flavours at the Blue Pelican.

In summer, the countryside is glorious. Lines of vines striate along the road, giving way to

In summer, the garden of England is in full bloom and filled with food discoveries

### Bridge Arms

Owner Dan Smith serves Michelin-star food at this pub and his Fordwich Arms.





### The Pig

Have pizza al fresco or eat in the dining room that serves food all grown within 25 miles.

### Gilda Bakery

Run by Jon Warren who supplies local eateries with his bread and bakes.



in for a dinner with local chefs popping-up, from Kent traiteur Wilson's Provisions or Quince in Westgate-on-Sea.

"Kent has 26% of all the vineyards in the country," says Jonathan Piggins, the owner. The boom isn't just down to terroir. "Families here have been farmers for generations, know how to grow fruit, deal with the idiosyncrasies of English weather, and still produce something very good."

A vineyard visit is a must for any Kent food trip. "Any one," Piggins says. "You're going to discover some lovely wines, and you're going to hear their stories – often direct from the owner or winemaker – and that's a lovely thing."

Gusborne and Balfour are beautiful, both well-known, and Simpsons has a helter-skelter to transport visitors from tasting room to winery, but Piggins also recommends taking in smaller interesting wineries, like Cary Wine Estate.

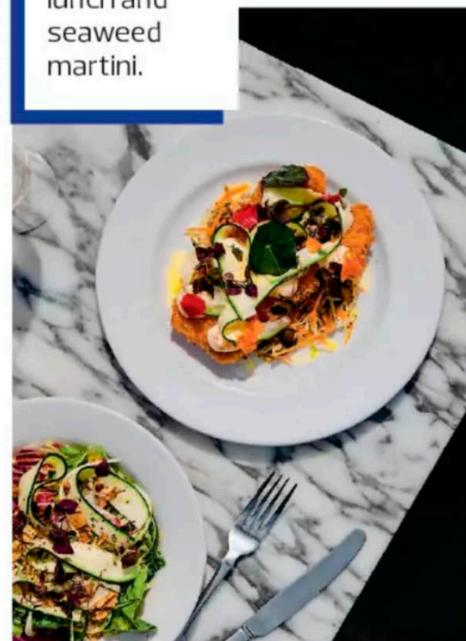
Vineyard touring can be tricky

without a car, but on a Saturday morning, pick up Canterbury's best coffee to go from Fringe & Ginge, maybe a slice of homemade cake, and take a pretty walk west along the Great Stour for an hour and a bit to Chartham Vineyard. Try a few, choose your favourites and get the train back to Canterbury (or have a local cab company number at the ready), clinking gently with your spoils.

If grapes are part of Kent's future, a more traditional crop is apples. Eastern Counties cider is light in colour and flavour, with low tannins, and fruit forward, floral characteristics, often down to using eating and cooking apples, rather than cider apples. In **Bekesbourne**, Sam Mount's family uses all three kinds to combine the styles for Kentish Pip. From April to September, their Woolton Barn opens its doors Friday to Sunday for sunny pints, orchard tours and wine tastings from the family's vineyard. There's an outdoor kitchen, sometimes music,

### The Rose

A Deal hotel and bar with a brilliant set lunch and seaweed martini.



## SIX OF THE BEST

### Raspberries

Vending machine, Kelsey Farm, Grove Road, Wickhambreaux

### Cinnamon morning bun

Gilda, Unit 1, Court Lodge Farm, Frog Ln, Bishopsbourne

### Oysters

The Bridge Arms, 53 High St, Bridge

### Gypsy tarts

Gibson's farm shop, Crockshard Hill, Wingham

### Gruff goat's cheese, celery, shallot, lovage

Goods Shed restaurant, Station Rd, Canterbury West

### Creme brulee

Folkestone Wine Company, 5 Church St, Folkestone

festival days with guest ciders, hedgerows to backdrop tipsy selfies, and campsites or furnished yurts if you fancy an actual farm stay.

Farms with changing seasonal bounty, says Mount, are a great reason to keep your eyes peeled as you drive: "Lots of cherry growers will have a little stall at the end of their farm drive, and you'll never get better cherries than that – straight from the orchard."

Likewise, any farm shop in Kent is likely worth a visit. At Canterbury's Goods Shed, the actual restaurant is on brilliant form at the moment; also, you can visit its own farm for a supper in the field and dine on the season's best with almost zero food miles. Providing the weather holds, it's hard to think of something more bucolic.

Those near **Faversham** should make a bee-line for Macknade food hall, while even smaller farm shops come through with the local goods – Gibsons near **Wingham** has a brilliant range of drinks and cheese, plus Wilmhurst's gypsy tarts (filled with evaporated milk whipped with muscovado sugar, little seen outside Kent). Perry Court Farm has a shop in **Wye**. Nearby, the Tickled Trout has local beers and outdoor seating right on the water, so you can hear the Stour trickle by. The final great Kent countryside tip: any pub garden on a sunny day is a good bet. **HOLLY O'NEILL & KATE GUEST**

# *‘Spain is much more than patatas bravas’*

*José Pizarro has been championing the cooking of his home country for 25 years. On his summer menu? Prawn pil pil tortilla, chicken chilindron, flan de fresa*





FOOD AND PROP STYLING: POLLY WEBB-WILSON

**W**hen José Pizarro first arrived in the UK in 1999 seeking to expand his horizons as a chef, he found a country in a benighted state of ignorance as far as Spanish food was concerned. “People were confusing jamón ibérico with parma ham,” he says with a shudder. “Everyone thought it was all just patatas bravas and sangría. I like patatas bravas and sangría, don’t get me wrong, but Spain is so much more than that.”

Fortunately, the public were eager to learn and Pizarro, who grew up eating his mother’s “simple but amazing” food in Extremadura, made it his mission to spread the word. He worked at several Spanish restaurants, including Brindisa, where he was executive chef. Then, in 2011, he opened two restaurants of his own on Bermondsey Street, south-east London: a tiny tapas bar named José and the larger Pizarro, both smash hits. Five more restaurants followed in London, Esher and Abu Dhabi, all temples to his native cuisine, with more on the way. At the same time, he has been championing Spanish food on TV, in six cookbooks, and at festivals and industry talks. In March, in recognition of his “extraordinary services to Spain”, Pizarro was awarded the officer’s cross of the Royal Order of Isabella the Catholic by the Spanish ambassador in London. (His mum, in attendance aged 90, was “very happy” about it all.)

Not bad for a boy with concentration issues from a small farming village in western Spain. Pizarro admits he wasn’t a great pupil, unable to focus on anything for more than a few minutes, unless it involved food or animals. He

was on the brink of becoming a dental technician in Seville when a cookery course diverted him into hospitality. His parents were dismayed but Pizarro – who says, “I have ADHD. I’m dyslexic” – found that the pressures of kitchens, where there are “always so many things going on”, helped him focus.

A head chef position in Madrid soon followed, and then his move to London where he has thrived for the past 25 years. Rare among empire-building chefs, he is yet to close down any of his restaurants in spite of Brexit, Covid and other pressures. What’s his explanation? “I want people to have a good time, to come out happier than when they went in,” he says. It has also helped that he operates without backers telling him what to do – part of the funding for his first restaurants was raised by selling his shares in Brindisa; the rest came from four other business partners whom he subsequently bought out.

Later this summer, Pizarro will open a third restaurant on Bermondsey Street, called Lolo. Meanwhile, he’s writing two more cookbooks and hosting culinary tours at Iris Zahara, his villa in southern Spain. “I don’t get much sleep,” he admits. “It’s my own fault. But I’m happy. The train passes only once, my friend, and definitely you have to take it.”

The effort seems to have been worth it, with Pizarro acknowledging that attitudes towards Spanish food have changed in Britain since he began championing it a quarter century ago.

“People now understand that Spain is many different countries in one,” he says. “Spain is not just ‘go to the beach’. It is thousands of years of history with so many different cultures mixing together and bringing their food and ingredients with them.” **KILLIAN FOX** >>

**Photographs**  
*Romas Foord*

*Left, prawn pil pil tortilla, see page 26*

## Prawn pil pil tortilla

A proper Spanish tortilla is always a little oozy in the centre, so take it out of the pan before it is fully set.

Serves 2 (or 4 as a tapa)

**olive oil** 200ml  
**onion** 1 medium, finely sliced  
**red-skinned potatoes** 400g, peeled and finely sliced  
**saffron strands** a tiny pinch  
**free-range eggs** 4 large  
**extra virgin olive oil** 75ml  
**garlic** 2 cloves, finely sliced  
**chilli flakes** a good pinch  
**smoked pimenton** a pinch  
**raw prawns** 200g  
**flat-leaf parsley** 2 tbsp, finely chopped

### Directions

Heat the olive oil in a 18-20cm non-stick frying pan, then add the onion and potatoes and cook very gently for 10 minutes, until

the potatoes are just tender.

Pour 1 tablespoon of hot water over the saffron and let it stand for 5 minutes, then beat it in a jug with the eggs and plenty of seasoning. Drain the potatoes and onion (reserve the oil), and while still warm toss together with the egg mixture.

Next, add 2 tablespoons of the oil back to the pan and, over a medium heat, pour in the egg and potato mixture. Jiggle until it starts to set around the edges then reduce the heat to low and cook for 5-6 minutes until it is almost but not quite set.

Meanwhile, heat the extra virgin olive oil in a second pan over a low heat and gently infuse the garlic, chilli flakes and pimenton for 3-4 minutes.

Invert the frying pan and tip the tortilla on to a flat board, then quickly slide it back into the pan – it might ooze a little, but don't worry as it will reform once you

get it back in the pan. Place back on the heat and, with a spatula, tuck the edges of the tortilla back under themselves to create the classic rounded edge. Continue to cook for 3-4 minutes more.

Increase the heat of the pan with the infused extra virgin olive oil to medium high, add the prawns and cook until they are pink all over (this should take 2-3 minutes). Add the parsley and season.

Turn the tortilla on to a plate, spoon over the pil pil prawns and serve.

## Summer pisto with golden manchego and crispy fried egg

Serves 4

**olive oil** 60ml, plus extra to fry  
**aubergine** 1, diced  
**red onion** 1, finely sliced  
**garlic** 2 cloves, bashed  
**courgettes** 2 medium, green and yellow if you can, chopped  
**red pepper** 1, chopped  
**cherry tomatoes** 300g, halved  
**fresh thyme** 4 sprigs  
**lemon** finely grated zest of 1  
**sherry vinegar** 2 tbsp  
**free-range eggs** 4  
**flat-leaf parsley** a small handful, finely chopped

### For the manchego

**manchego** 250g, cut into cubes (or vegetarian manchego, if you prefer)  
**plain flour** 2 tbsp  
**free-range egg** 1, beaten  
**panko breadcrumbs** 100g  
**olive oil** 300ml, to fry  
**honey** 1 tbsp

### Directions

Heat the oil in a saute pan or shallow casserole and, on a medium heat, fry the diced aubergine for 10 minutes, turning occasionally until it is lightly coloured and has released the oil back into the pan.

Add the onion and continue to fry on a medium heat for 5 minutes until softened, then add the garlic, courgette and pepper. Fry for a further 5 minutes, then add the cherry tomatoes, lemon



AMIT LENNON





Left, summer pisto with golden manchego and crispy fried egg. Right, gilda devilled eggs.



zest and vinegar. Season well and simmer gently for 15-20 minutes: the tomatoes will relax and soften, creating the juice.

Meanwhile, dust the manchego cubes all over in flour. Dip the cubes in the beaten egg then coat them all over in panko.

Next, heat the oil in a small deep pan to 170C and fry the cubes of cheese a few at a time, until golden and crisp (this should take roughly a minute as the pieces are small). Carefully remove and drain on some kitchen towel.

At the same time, heat a good layer of oil in a non-stick pan and fry the 4 eggs so they bubble and crisp around the edges. Cook until the yolks are as you like them.

Spoon the pisto into bowls, scatter with parsley, then top with the cheese. Drizzle with honey, top with a fried egg and serve.

### Gilda devilled eggs

Keep any leftover alioli in a jar in the fridge for up to 5 days. If you want a quick cheat for the alioli, use 2 tablespoons of good quality mayonnaise mixed with a little freshly grated garlic instead.

*Makes 8*

**free-range eggs** 4 large  
**alioli** 2 tbsp (see recipe below)  
**smoked sweet pimenton** a good pinch, plus extra to serve  
**piquillo pepper** 1, finely chopped  
**capers** 2 tsp, drained, rinsed and chopped  
**salted anchovies** 2-3  
**guindilla peppers** 2, or chilli peppers

**pitted green olives** 8 large  
**extra virgin olive oil** to drizzle

*For the alioli*

**free-range egg yolk** 1 large  
**garlic** 1 small clove, grated  
**cider vinegar** 1 tsp  
**olive oil** 125ml  
**extra virgin olive oil** 2 tbsp (this adds a really rich and delicious flavour to the alioli)  
**lemon juice** to taste

► *Directions*

Put the eggs in a pan of cold water, bring to the boil, then continue to boil for 6 minutes. Drain until cool under cold running water.

Next, make the alioli. Put the egg yolk in a bowl with sea salt and pepper (either white or freshly ground black, depending on your preference). Whisk in the garlic and cider vinegar.

Gradually whisk in the olive oil until you have a smooth, thick emulsion, then whisk in the extra virgin olive oil and 1 tablespoon of just boiled water. Add lemon juice to taste and set aside.

Peel the eggs and halve them lengthways. Scoop the yolks out into a bowl and mash well, then add 2 tablespoons of the alioli, a pinch of pimenton, the piquillo pepper and the capers. Mix well, then spoon this mixture back into the egg white halves and arrange on a plate.

Slice the anchovy and guindilla into small pieces, and stuff the green olives with as much of them as you can. Put an olive on each egg half, drizzle with extra virgin olive oil, add a good grind of fresh black pepper and serve. >>

## Beetroot salmorejo with anchovy toasts

*Serves 4 (or 6 as a small starter)*  
**beetroot** 1 medium, cleaned  
**really ripe tomatoes** 500g, cored and chopped  
**slightly stale white bread** 100g, torn  
**garlic** 2 cloves, crushed  
**sherry vinegar** 2 tsp  
**water** 300-350ml  
**extra virgin olive oil** 75ml

### For the toasts

**baguette** 8 slices  
**garlic** 1 clove, peeled  
**salted anchovies** 16, or boquerones if you prefer  
**chives** 2 tbsp, snipped  
**extra virgin olive oil** 2 tbsp

### Directions

Heat the oven to 180C fan/gas

mark 6. Wrap the beetroot in foil and roast for 40-45 minutes until tender to the point of a knife. Unwrap and when cool enough to handle, peel off the skin and chop into small pieces.

Put the chopped beetroot and the tomatoes in a blender and blitz until smooth. Add the bread, garlic and vinegar, as well as plenty of sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, and blitz again till smooth.

Gradually whizz in the water until you have smooth, thick soup, then blend in the extra virgin olive oil. Pour into a jug and chill for at least 2 hours.

Toast the baguette slices and rub them with the clove of garlic. Arrange 2 anchovies on each toast. Divide the soup into 4 bowls, top each one with 2 toasts and scatter with chives. Drizzle with oil, add a grind of black pepper and serve.



## Chicken chilindron

The juiciness of the sauce will depend on the tomatoes you use, so if you take the lid off after 20 minutes and it does not look like it needs reducing, keep cooking with the lid on. If you like, you can add a tin or jar of chickpeas at the end.

*Serves 4-6*  
**red peppers** 2  
**free-range chicken thighs** 8, bone in, skin on  
**smoked sweet pimenton** 1 tsp  
**olive oil** 2 tbsp  
**onion** 1 large, finely sliced  
**garlic** 3 cloves, bashed  
**fresh oregano** 3 sprigs  
**manzanilla sherry** 200ml  
**ripe tomatoes** 500g, chopped  
**fresh chicken stock** 150ml  
**pitted black olives** 125g  
**salted anchovies** 3  
**flat-leaf parsley** a handful, chopped

### Directions

Blacken the peppers on the flame of the hob (or you can use a high grill). Once charred all over, pop them in a plastic bag to steam.

Season the chicken thighs with pimenton, sea salt and freshly

ground black pepper. Heat the oil in a casserole or frying pan on a medium high heat and brown the chicken all over (it will take 8-10 minutes for them to take on a good colour). Remove from the pan and set aside.

Remove the skin from the peppers, discard the seeds, then slice into strips.

Add the onion to the pan and fry on a medium heat for 5 minutes until it starts to soften, then add the garlic and oregano and fry for a few more minutes. Return the chicken to the pan, add the peppers and sherry, and let it bubble for a minute or two before adding the tomatoes and stock. Season well and bring to the boil.

Cover and reduce to simmer and cook for 20 minutes. Remove the lid and cook for 20 minutes more to allow the sauce to reduce slightly.

Add the olives and anchovies and cook, still at a low, simmering temperature, for 10 minutes more until the sauce is reduced. Scatter with parsley and serve with crusty bread.

From far left, beetroot salmorejo with anchovy toasts; chicken chilindron; flan de fresa

## Flan de fresa

You can make these individually sized, if you prefer. Divide the caramel between 8 small ramekins, then pour the strawberry mixture over the top. Cook and chill in the same way.

Serves 8

**caster sugar** 150g  
**strawberries** 150g, washed and hulled, plus 200g to serve  
**condensed milk** 1 x 397g tin  
**whole milk** 200ml  
**free-range eggs** 3 large, plus 1 free-range yolk  
**vanilla bean paste** 2 tsp

### Directions

Heat the oven to 150C fan/gas mark 3½ and boil a large kettle.

In a pan, heat the sugar with 3 tablespoons of water until melted, then increase the heat and bubble without stirring until you have a lovely golden caramel. Pour into a round 20cm ovenproof ceramic baking dish or tarte tatin tin, swirl to coat, then leave to cool.

Blend the strawberries until they form a smooth puree. Then add the condensed milk and whole milk, and blend again until you have a smooth pink mixture.

Whisk the eggs, yolk and vanilla in a large jug until smooth, then whisk in the strawberry mixture. Pour it over the caramel, then place inside a large, deep-sided roasting tin and place in the centre of the oven. Pour boiling water into the roasting tin about half way up the side of the baking dish, then cook for 40-45 minutes until it is set but with a slight wobble.

Remove from the oven and cool, then chill for at least 3 hours.

Run a sharp knife around the outside of the dish and invert on to a plate with a lip. You will feel a satisfying plop when it releases and the caramel floods the plate. Serve with extra strawberries. **OFM** [josepizarro.com](http://josepizarro.com)

*The Observer aims to publish recipes using fish rated as sustainable by the Marine Conservation Society's Good Fish Guide*



# *The summer I learned to eat*

*In the early 1990s, Viv Groskop ate her way around Russia and Ukraine, a world of dumplings, borscht and third helpings*

Illustration  
Cat O'Neil



T

hirty years ago, I spent the year I turned 21 in the former Soviet Union, starting in St Petersburg and ending up in Ukraine. I was studying Russian but most of my friends were Ukrainian. This was the time when the former USSR had recently started to call itself the Commonwealth of Independent States. Although Ukraine had been independent for three years, overt declarations of national identity were mostly buried beneath the surface. Until it came to food and drink.

Among my friends it was a matter of great importance as to whether you privileged borsch over *shchi* (beetroot soup v cabbage soup) or *horilka* over vodka (Ukrainian wheat-based vodka versus Russian potato-based vodka). The main thing that kept me going through one of the coldest Russian winters on record, however, was not the drink but the thought of a lazy hot summer in the south of Ukraine. It was the year I learned my way around a kitchen. And, by the time I got to Odesa (then Odessa) – with its famous meze dishes, such as aubergine caviar, its post-Soviet kebab kiosks and an endless supply of Eskimo ice-cream – it was the summer I really learned to eat.

This was another world, five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall when people still talked about “the Iron Curtain”. For a few of us from the west who came of age around this time, these countries were among the first places we travelled alone as adults, the first places we ate food that you couldn’t get back home. Even if some of that food was *kholodets* (meat in aspic). To look at what has happened over the past two years, it feels like I dreamed those months. Or it happened in another lifetime.

The place names from my memories of that summer are now familiar for the worst of reasons. Odesa is on the front line and Kryvyi Rih, then Krivoy Rog (“Crooked Horn”) – Volodymyr Zelenskiy’s hometown, where I

spent most of July and August 1994, the place the president calls “his big heart and soul” – is under constant aerial bombardment. It is becoming impossible to remember these places as they once were. Certain parts of Ukraine, the Black Sea port of Odesa in particular, were once more commonly thought of in terms of romance, culture and hedonism, never more so than just after the country’s independence in 1991. At that time there was a sense of optimism, despite the intensity of the “shock therapy” to the economy and the queues outside shops. Any animosity between the different parts of the former Soviet Union seemed to be obscured, and disagreements played down, at least in front of foreigners.

Most people I encountered that year had never met a foreigner before and had not expected to do so in their lifetime. A lot of their focus was on culinary treats. In Russia, these were the early Yeltsin years, when Uncle Ben’s was being advertised on a loop on state TV and advertising hoardings for Snickers, Baskin Robbins and Milka chocolate were everywhere. I was often asked to confirm whether Bounty really is “the taste of paradise” or, as it was translated into Russian in a mellifluous voiceover, “*raiskoye naslazhdeniye*” – paradisiacal gratification, although few could afford these exotic things. They cost sometimes as much as 20 times the price of local equivalents.

This was not a time of plenty. Everyone carried an *avoska* – a “just in case” string shopping bag, for the moments when you came across a shop that had suddenly received a consignment of goods. When I first visited the former USSR in 1992, I lived with a Russian host mother who, one morning, solemnly and with great reverence served me a solitary tomato for breakfast. (I tried to argue that we should share it.) Bread sprinkled with sugar was a treat. I was on tour with my boyfriend’s punk rock band in the summer of 1994 (he was the lead guitarist) and, away from their mums’ pancakes and borsch, they subsisted solely >>

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Viv Groskop in St Petersburg on her year in the east, and traditional Ukrainian borsch



Ukrainian, a language called *surzhyk* – the name for bread made with a sprinkling of rye. I never met anyone who made a big deal about the difference between the speaking of Russian and Ukrainian at this time: you just spoke however you spoke. As to the future, there was at least a clue to what it held in the preparation

on cans of peas and *tushonka* (stewed meat), both eaten unheated from the tin.

That year, I learned to cook Russian and Ukrainian dishes but I also learned a mish-mash of home cooks' favourite recipes from many of the former Soviet republics: pastes and flatbreads from Georgia, polenta (*mamaliga*) from Moldova, lamb casseroles and pilaf from Armenia. Some were cooked by friends or families who had "adopted" me. Some were elaborate family recipes that had been passed down. Others were informed guesses or variations on a theme.

What little that people had was to be shared. If they had more than a little, it was to be lavished upon you. The concept of *gostipriimnost* (hospitality) meant that guests must be well fed, preferably overfed. To neglect your duties as a host was shameful. To neglect your obligations as a guest – to overeat, to enjoy the food to the most demonstrative extent and to match your host drink for drink – was unthinkable.

People were horrified if you didn't want a second or third helping. Even when you tried to stop eating after three servings, they would sulk and say "*Obidno*" (you are insulting me). The first host mother I lived with would tell me, approvingly, that I was "*pukhlinkaya*" (chubby in a cute way). When we visited my Ukrainian boyfriend's grandmother at her dacha, she took one look at me, narrowed her eyes and spat that I had "*zhopa yak u vorobyu*" (an arse like a sparrow).

I was teaching English to adult learners and many of my unofficial cookery teachers were my students. The first to invite me into her kitchen was Oksana, a shy and always immaculately made-up Uzbek woman. She was raised in Tashkent and wanted to demonstrate her mother's recipe for *manty* (dumplings). I didn't really know what dumplings were, let alone how they were made. Oksana ceremonially unpacked the gleaming *mantovarka* (Uzbek dumpling steamer) she kept in a bottom drawer. The dough was made from scratch on a table with much sprinkling of flour. The elegant and meditative *manty* process required being a cross between a professional chef and a sculptor, all within the confines of a kitchen that was about two metres square. The circles of dough were cut expertly by hand, heaped with an aromatic mix of meat, carrot and onion, carefully bundled up and pinched deftly into a ruffle at the top.

Once they were cooked, we waited for the

puffy, meat-filled parcels to cool so the insides wouldn't burn our tongues. "You can decide how you eat them," Oksana explained, "Some eat them all in one bite. Some nibble a hole and suck out the juice for good luck." They were like miniature soft, wilted Cornish pasties or giant puffball ravioli, a sort of inflated version of dim sum. They were fragrant, juicy, delicious. And although they had taken a long time to make, it was a simple process that only really required patience.

Knowing about *manty* and how to eat them (you bite off the top and suck out the juice) stood me in good stead by the time I arrived in Odesa. For centuries, the city has been famous for its restaurants, museums, theatres and opera house (whose basement is now used as an air-raid shelter.) In the early 1990s it was the heart of the post-Soviet tourist industry: people would expect to treat themselves to their favourite foods while they were on vacation, whether *khachapuri* (Georgian flat bread) or *voblya* (dried fish which people bought to eat on the beach). There were cafes and food vans on every corner. That summer I ate variations on all the foods people had taught me to cook that year, anything to escape the tinned meat the guys in the band feasted on.

This was, of course, all before food became as political as everything else. In Ukraine, my boyfriend's mother taught me how to cook *syrniki* pancakes with *tvorog* (curd cheese), talking to me in a mix of Russian and

**To neglect your obligations as a guest – to overeat and drink – was unthinkable**

of borsch. A Russian host mother had told me that borsch was a Russian dish (*bezuslovno* – undoubtedly) – as long as you added beef. Ukrainians told me it was Ukrainian (*bezumovno* – undoubtedly) and must include *salo* (pig fat). Ukrainian borsch was added to the Unesco "endangered heritage" list in 2022.

After I got back from Ukraine, a lot of that cooking might have been lost to me were it not for Anya von Bremzen's 1990 recipe collection, *Please to the Table*, itself a product of another era with its celebration of more than 400 delicacies of the former Soviet Union. I was given a copy shortly after I got home to England, and many of its recipes have been the dishes I have cooked the most over the past three decades: pilaf with a crust, mushroom julienne and – of course – *manty*. Latterly I've come to rely on cookbooks by writers such as Olia Hercules and Alissa Timoshkina who have popularised creative contemporary recipes that move way beyond the boundaries of the post-Soviet world. As for all the people I knew back then, I have lost touch with most of them over the past 30 years. By the mid 1990s, many were headed either for Moscow or abroad. The innocence of that time is long gone. Von Bremzen's latest book, *National Dish*, is explicitly about the politicisation of food and contains a chapter that explores her family's complicated feelings about cooking Russian recipes. It makes a point of explaining the importance of accepting borsch as uniquely – and undoubtedly – Ukrainian. **OFM**

The fee for this article, and all author proceeds from the book below, will be donated to PEN International Appeal for Writers in Danger. *One Ukrainian Summer* by Viv Groskop (Bonnie Books, £16.99) is out now. To order a copy for £14.44 go to [guardianbookshop.com](http://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply



## The last word

# Rachel Cooke

*I thought I was done with Sunday lunch. But – wake up and smell the crackling – it’s definitely back*

**F**or better or worse, I associate Sunday lunch with high drama. As a teenager, it often seemed to be the moment for an argument or even some kind of life-changing big reveal (I’ll save the details for the memoir). There was also, of course, the fact that my parents were divorced: at my dad’s, lunch was swiftly followed by the journey home to my mum, and The Handover. By 4pm, I never knew whether the rumbling of my stomach was down to overindulgence – our Sunday lunches were decadently vast, and my greed, even then, almost boundless – or a nervousness that was born of wanting to please all the adults (and knowing I might fail).

The Freudians out there will say that it’s thanks to this that I have tended to avoid Sunday lunch as an adult. But I don’t think the two things are connected. Unless I’m on holiday – in which case, cheers, and pass the rosé – I often skip lunch, whatever the day. The simple fact is that for a long time, the Sunday roast was out of favour – a trend you noticed mostly, though not exclusively, because the newspapers were always trumpeting its “return”, a roast potato-shaped comeback that would finally see off brunch for ever. When I went north to see my family, it was more in evidence – in pubs, the gravy still ran like Tetley’s – but at home my mum now often served the big Sunday meal in the evening, and it was as likely to be a piece of salmon as a leg of lamb. In London, meanwhile, the prospect of Sunday lunch began to seem almost outlandish in the face of new developments such as yoga and Yotam Ottolenghi: a meal out of the ark, only less eco-friendly because the animals were all dead.



*‘Non-negotiable’ beef being carved at the Devonshire, Soho*

**Sunday lunch began to seem outlandish in the face of yoga and Ottolenghi**

**B**ut now I’m calling it. Long live Sunday lunch, for I believe that it really is back at last, English mustard, creamed leeks and all. Admittedly, this conviction is based thus far only on my own (patchy) experiences. But if political pundits are allowed to constantly sniff the air, I don’t see why part-time food writers can’t do the same – especially when it smells so deliciously of crackling. So, here goes. Anecdote one. Before our summer holiday in the Lake District, I quickly discovered not only that those friends who told me I needed to book Sunday lunch six weeks ahead were right, but also that I would struggle to choose a venue, the scallops and best ribs on offer all over the place an almost poignantly far cry from the Dairylea triangles I used to eat as a

child in the car park at Broughton-in-Furness en route to Wasdale with my dad. (Yeah, we were hardcore: no weedy Windermere for us).

Anecdote two. I finally managed – to be accurate, our friends L&S finally managed – to get a Sunday lunch booking at the Devonshire in Soho, a pub whose Taylor Swift-like popularity you may already have heard about. Oh my God. We went in at 2.45pm, but if I expected the place to be quietening a little by then, I couldn’t have been more wrong. Even as I tapped my yorkshire pudding with a finger – you want your batter to be melodious, don’t you? – diners continued to arrive, many of them with pints of Guinness in their hands. It was like some huge and wondrous celebration, all kinds of people of all kinds of ages all eating exactly the same thing (you can choose your starter, but the roast beef, which sits under a big silver dome, is non-negotiable).

Our waitress, brisk and lovely, told me they do 500 covers on a Sunday, which made me think that the Devonshire’s publican extraordinaire, Oisín Rogers, really might be some kind of genius (he was prowling the room in his chore jacket, his eyes flicking from side to side like Zendaya’s in that crazy tennis film, *Challengers*). It wasn’t only that the meat was rare, and the carrots just soft enough, and the horseradish astonishingly abundant. The room fairly pulsed with contentment. Some people (*imagine it!*) were even talking to the strangers on the next table. I know it sounds cheesy and sentimental, but to me, and perhaps to the entire room, it felt like coming home – and in this sense if no other, I really do hope the future is going to look just a little bit like the past. **OFM** @MsRachelCooke

JONATHAN LOVEKIN; A SHILEY PALMER-WATTS



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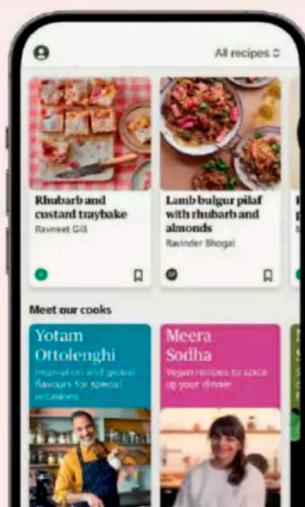


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