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SUMMER FAVOURITE

FOOD

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GREECE

EXPLORE THE COUNTRY DISH BY DISH, FROM A STEW
ON SIFNOS TO A GARLICKY DIP IN MACEDONIA



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TURKISH AIRLINES

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PAVLOVA

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Manon Fleury



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Roasted aubergine dip,
yellow split pea dip. Image:
Mowie Kay © Ryland Peters
& Small, taken from *Cypriana*
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CONTRIBUTORS



Leyla Rose

As an Indonesian who grew up eating tempeh, I thought I knew everything about it. But writing this story introduced me to new ways of preparing this curious ingredient — it had never crossed my mind that it could be used in desserts. It's exciting to watch its popularity grow as Lombok's food scene begins to flourish. **LOMBOK, P. 36**



Helen Iatrou

My mother's skordalia — a garlic dip enjoyed year-round in Greece but especially with fried cod on Greek Independence Day — is strong enough to torch taste buds. I loved chatting with taverna owners about the walnut version traditionally made in Macedonia — a rarity on menus these days. **COVER STORY, P. 26**



Anastasia Miari

I've loved exploring Greece via its food and discovering that it's incredibly regional. Pastitsada — pasta with a spiced meat sauce — is my all-time favourite dish and what I was raised on, growing up on the island of Corfu. It's been a pleasure to dive into its history and cultural significance to Corfiots. **COVER STORY, P. 26**



Felicity Cloake

Pavlova is a dish I thought I knew well, but when I dug deeper into those layers of cream and meringue, I realised I really didn't. It turns out the link to a Russian ballerina is one of the least interesting things about a dessert whose story takes in the aristocratic kitchens of Europe and an international dispute across the Tasman Sea. **DECONSTRUCT, P. 44**

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Editor's letter

ISSUE 28, SUMMER 2025



Vibrant salads of sun-ripened tomatoes, crunchy cucumber and tangy cheese. Unctuous dips paired with fresh bread. Gently spiced meat, seafood and veggie dishes. Greece is one of the world's great gastronomic destinations, full of the flavours of summer — so, in this issue of *Food*, we're giving you the lowdown on six of the country's iconic dishes. Check out our cover story (p.26) to find out what to eat — and where.

Since launching *Food* in 2018, we've garnered numerous awards, both for the magazine itself and for our editors and contributors, who've travelled far and wide in search of the world's tastiest dishes, pioneering chefs and fascinating food cultures. You'll find all that and more in this issue. Don't miss our interview with chef Manon Fleury, who's fighting for feminism from the kitchen of her Paris restaurant (p.20). Or our exploration of how tempeh is finding its way into all manner of dishes on the Indonesian island of Lombok (p.36). Or our essential guides to the dynamic dining scenes of Lisbon (p.62), Puerto Rico (p.68) and beyond.

It's been an honour and a pleasure to be part of the *Food* team from its very first issue, and while this edition will be our last in print, you won't have to go far to keep reading our mouth-watering content. We'll be upping the culinary coverage in *National Geographic Traveller* (UK), as well as online at nationalgeographic.com/travel. See you there!

Nicola

Nicola Trup, editor



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WHAT'S ONLINE AT [NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM/TRAVEL](https://nationalgeographic.com/travel)

Chill out

Where to find the best gelato in Rome, from classic family-run parlours to more experimental, modern establishments.

Lift the spirit

How enterprising bartenders in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh are reviving mahua, an ancient liquor outlawed under colonial rule.

Seaside favourites

Our insider's guide to Cornwall's top fish and chips, whether your order is a hefty haddock or a small portion of scampi.





TRY IT NOW

Rotisserie chicken

POULTRY COOKED ON A ROTATING SPIT IS MAKING A COMEBACK

Rotisserie chicken is spinning back into fashion at full speed. Birds have been roasted on spits for centuries (Napoleon Bonaparte was apparently a fan of chicken cooked this way), but the rotisserie as we know it today is said to have originated in 1950s Peru. And while it was originally popular among the upper classes, it's become a staple of the supermarket 'hot food' section in recent decades. Now, however, high-end chefs are falling back in love with the rotisserie chicken's crispy skin and juicy flesh.

This is certainly the case in London, where you'll find a wide spectrum of versions. Describing itself as a 'Parisian-inspired rotisserie-style restaurant', Story Cellar in Covent Garden offers a classic take by chef Tom Sellers. It's served half or whole, with salad and fries. And at The Knave of Clubs in Shoreditch, the bird is coated in either a classic glaze or chermoula spices.

Over at Fowl, in the St James's area, William Murray gives his Suffolk-reared animals an Asian twist with a shiitake mushroom and rice stuffing. Nearby Lima Cantina marinates its birds in Peruvian herbs and spices before they're cooked in what it claims is London's first rotombo — a traditional Peruvian rotisserie oven. They're then served with an aji amarillo and huacatay (hot chilli and black mint) sauce.

At Michelin-starred Knightsbridge restaurant Vatavaran, Rohit Ghai has created a 'rotisserie masala' with a succulent bone marrow sauce, and at the recently opened Toun, in Mayfair, the Lebanese-style rotisserie chicken comes with the eponymous creamy garlic sauce, chimichurri or cafe de Paris butter sauce.

Rotisserie isn't just popular in London, however; you'll find smart examples everywhere from Manchester (at Trading Route, Tartuffe and more) to St Ives (Ardor). Nor does it need to be chicken — in Australia, pioneering 'gill-to-fin' chef Josh Niland gives fish the rotisserie treatment at his Sydney restaurant, Saint Peter.



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WHAT THEY'RE EATING IN

TALLINN

Estonian chefs are combining local ingredients with global inspiration, dishing up Dagestani dumplings, chanterelle hummus and more

Kurze dumplings are the star of the menu at The Kurze

THE KURZE
KURZE

Housed in three shipping containers by the railyards, The Kurze feels like a rustic cabin, with mismatched furniture and homemade lemonade served in enamel cups. The kurze themselves — ridge-sealed dumplings from the Russian republic of Dagestan — are the stars of the menu. Founder Nuriyan Navruzova, a former journalist who fled her home there during the Second Chechen War, began selling them in 2018. Demand exploded and now her cosy restaurant offers five varieties — lamb, beef, potato, pumpkin and cheese, all coloured with vegetable dyes for a photogenic touch and served with a tomato dip. thekurze.ee

BARBAREA
CHANTERELLE
HUMMUS

Chef Kenneth Karjane leads the kitchen in this repurposed boot factory in the up-and-coming Kopli district. Hummus is always on the menu, but made with seasonal ingredients rather than chickpeas. In warmer months, that means chanterelles from the boundless Estonian forests, blended silky smooth with tahini and spices, topped with roasted mushrooms, dill and black pepper oil. Served with sourdough pitta from the onsite bakery, “it tastes like Estonian summer,” according to Karjane. barbarea.ee

SAL!
REUBEN
SANDWICH

Tallinn's go-to spot for sandwiches is located in a cellar overlooked by a portrait of former president Lennart Meri. Owner Daanius Aas, winner of the Michelin Young Chef Award in 2023, takes inspiration from the late-night cravings he gets after work. His take on the classic reuben respects the original but features local produce: tender Estonian brisket pastrami, sauerkraut from a local farm and marble rye bread made in a Tallinn bakery. It's best enjoyed with a side of fried pickles, and is a budget-friendly favourite with students and homesick Americans. saisai.ee

LORE BISTROO
FISH SOUP

In summer, Estonians typically crave two things: sea views and a bowl of fish soup. At Lore Bistroom — in the Noblessner district, where submarines were built in tsarist times — both things are in abundance. It's a surprising rarity in Tallinn, a maritime city with few waterfront dining spots. Chef Janno Leppik's fish soup is a classic island-style dish, made with fresh trout from the Baltic waters around Saaremaa island, along with cod and garden vegetables, generously sprinkled with the national obsession: dill. It's light yet comforting, bringing loyal locals from all over town. lorebistroom.ee

RADO
CAULIFLOWER

Rado has a refreshingly straightforward chalkboard menu, listing dishes in single words — picanha (beef), tuna, cauliflower — but the flavours are far from simple. Slovakian chef Radoslav Mitro honours his mother's cooking with the cauliflower offering: a boiled piece of the brassica, generously coated in parmesan sauce with thyme, then crowned with grated parmesan. It's so beloved the patrons won't let Mitro take it off the menu, no matter how many times the rest of the chalkboard changes. radoestoran.ee
Tom Peeters

SPOTLIGHT

Vineyard restaurants

ENGLAND'S TOP WINERIES ARE INCREASINGLY PAIRING THEIR VINTAGES WITH SMART DISHES THAT DRAW ON THE BEST LOCAL PRODUCE



1 Hambledon Vineyard, Hampshire

Operating since 1952, Hambledon is the UK's oldest commercial winery. Its award-winning sparkling wines include the classic cuvee and, new for 2025, its first blanc de blancs. There's a beautiful tasting room and the new restaurant is already a destination in its own right; overseen by head chef Nick Edgar, seasonal menus feature chalk stream trout with watercress, best end of lamb or Old Winchester cheese soufflé. hambledonvineyard.co.uk

2 Restaurant Interlude, West Sussex

Blending his South African heritage with classic European cooking, executive chef Jean Delpont has helped Interlude, the elegant restaurant with rooms at the heart of the Leonardslee Estate, earn both a Michelin star and Michelin Green star. Foraged ingredients from the local landscape include wild garlic, bracken fiddleheads and hazelnuts, while the estate rears its own venison. restaurant-interlude.co.uk

3 The Swan, Kent

Sip and overlook the vines at this rooftop bistro-terrace above Chapel Down's tasting room. Two AA Rosettes have been awarded for British-Mediterranean dishes, which are paired with feted wines from the 1,000-acre estate. Seasonality reigns and the menu might include Romney Marsh lamb with Moroccan mint yoghurt that sings when accompanied by a 2022 bacchus from Chapel Down's Kit's Coty North Downs vineyard. A glass of the rosé brut pairs well with the Kent rhubarb parfait. swanchapeldown.co.uk

4 Sandridge Barton, Devon

Founded in the 1980s, Sharpham Wine has recently shifted its focus to low-intervention wines. Set on the Sandridge Barton estate, the winery is home to rustic-chic tasting barns and a restaurant in the old milking parlour with a menu centered on Devon produce. Try the likes of estate beef fillet, red chicory and anchoiade, or a range of Sharpham cheeses, perfect with its medal-winning pinot noir. sandridgebarton.com

5 Tillingham, East Sussex

Tillingham has made a name for itself (and earned a Michelin Green star) thanks to its biodynamic approach to viticulture and bucolic setting in the Sussex High Weald. At the estate complex, flavourful natural wines sit alongside wood-fired pizzas and the likes of goat's cheese mousse with charred peach, seared local scallops with black pudding crumb, and Pevensy lamb rump. There are stylish bedrooms in a converted hop barn as well as bell tents in the summer. tillingham.com

From top: Hambledon Vineyard; executive chef Jean Delpont at Restaurant Interlude; Dover sole meuniere at Tillingham

WORDS: CONNOR MCGOVERN, SARAH BARRELL.
IMAGES: ELLIE WALPOLE; @EXPOZURE PHOTOGRAPHY; ALICE DENNY

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F L O R I D A

NUMBER CRUNCHING

PICKLES

As one of the oldest types of food preservation, pickling plays an integral role in food cultures all around the world



30

THE TIME IN MINUTES NECESSARY FOR LIME OR ORANGE JUICE TO PICKLE RAW SEABASS TO MAKE CEVICHE. THE ACIDITY 'COOKS' THE FISH SIMILARLY TO HEAT.



169

The age of the world's oldest jar of pickled cucumbers still in existence. It was part of the goods on the Steamboat Arabia, a cargo ship that sank in the Missouri River in 1856, and was unearthed more than 130 years later.



3

The minimum number of years needed for Indian lemon pickle to gain reputed probiotic properties. Some households keep theirs for more than 30 years, by which time it's turned completely black.



11,000

The number of cabbages acquired by the imperial Turkish court in 1620 for the sole purpose of pickling.



2030 BCE

THE YEAR WHEN CUCUMBERS WERE BROUGHT FROM INDIA TO THE TIGRIS VALLEY IN THE MIDDLE EAST – BELIEVED TO BE THE BIRTHPLACE OF PICKLING.



17 MILLION

THE NUMBER OF JARS OF BRANSTON PICKLE SOLD IN BRITAIN EACH YEAR. IT'S MADE WITH CARROTS, CAULIFLOWER, ONIONS, SWEDES, TOMATO PUREE AND DATE PASTE.



57

The number of pickle types HJ Heinz touted in its advertising in the late 19th century. The company got its start by selling pickled horseradish and spiced dill pickles out of barrels in 1869.



20%

The salinity of traditional umeboshi, Japanese pickled plums, which are picked unripe and then salted. They've played a crucial role in military meals since they were fed to samurai in the 16th century.

Sources: 1856.com aljazeera.com artsandculture.google.com heinzhistorycenter.org japanesewiki.com mashed.com kitchensterling.com nyfoodmuseum.org *Pickles: A Global History*



FIVE WAYS WITH

Tofu

WITH A VARIETY OF FORMS AND TEXTURES, THIS INGREDIENT IS AN IDEAL FLAVOUR CARRIER.

WORDS: AMY POON

Like most Chinese people, I grew up with tofu as a staple — as common as eggs and rice. With its mild flavour, it takes on the taste of whatever it's seasoned or cooked with, and is also very forgiving and easy to handle.

Chinese legend has it that tofu was invented by Prince Liu An during the Han Dynasty, and whether or not that's true, it's been consumed in China for over 2,000 years. In a process not dissimilar to cheese-making, it's created by coagulating soy milk and then pressing the resulting curds into solid blocks of varying softness — silken, soft, firm and others.

While it's widely used in East and Southeast Asian cooking, in the West tofu has historically been perceived as a meat substitute and less of an ingredient in its own right, but the tide is turning. More and more diners — veggie or otherwise — are discovering the joys of this low-calorie, protein-rich, versatile ingredient.

Different varieties work well in different dishes. Firm is best in braised and fried meals, whereas the soft, silken variety is great for steamed and chilled dishes. Here are some tasty ideas for how to use tofu.

1 Chilled with avocado

Drain and slice a block of silken tofu and top with diced avocado and a dressing of soy sauce, rice vinegar, sesame oil, chilli oil and sugar or honey. Garnish with spring onion.

2 Dressing

Blend silken tofu, parsley, chives, mint, garlic, lemon juice and zest, vinegar and a little olive oil until smooth. You'll be left with a creamy salad dressing.

3 Fried

Combine cornflour, salt, white pepper, chilli powder and smoked paprika. Cube some pressed firm tofu and toss in the cornflour mix. Fry until golden and crunchy. Fry chopped chilli and minced garlic, toss with the tofu and serve with chopped spring onions.

4 Braised

Drain, dry and slice medium-firm tofu and fry until golden. Fry ginger, the chopped white parts of spring onions, Shaoxing rice wine, soy sauce, sugar and water. Add the tofu back in with the chopped green bits of the spring onions and braise. Thicken with cornflour diluted in a little water and serve.

5 Soup

Sauté ginger and spring onions in a little oil, add soy sauce and chicken or vegetable stock, white pepper, salt and leafy vegetables. Add cubed medium-firm tofu and boil, finishing with sesame oil and chopped spring onions.



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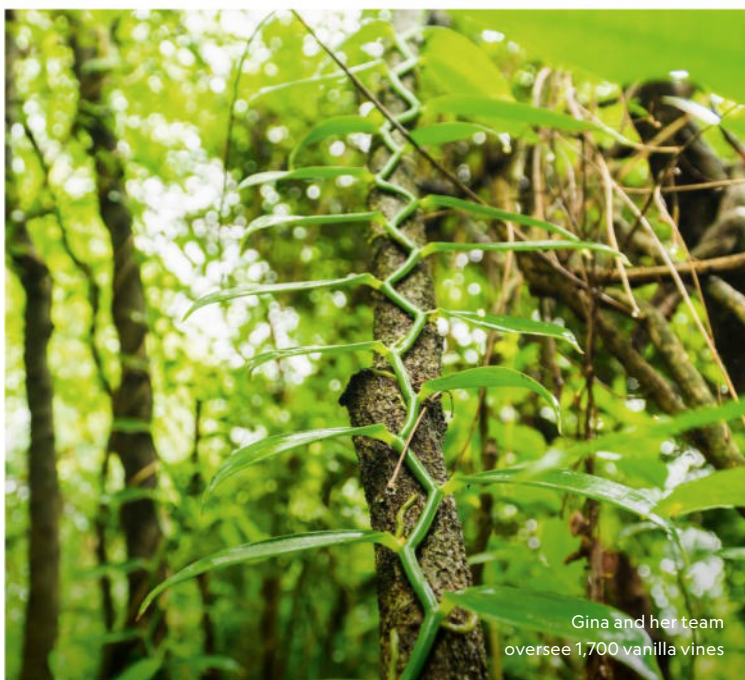


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MEET THE MAKER

POD TO PLATE

The Caribbean island of Nevis inspired Gina Empson to give up her life as an accountant in Europe and set up a pioneering vanilla farm



Gina and her team oversee 1,700 vanilla vines

"We sit in the shade of the guinep tree and I give guests a drink of liquid gold," says Gina Empson of xocolatl, a vanilla-spiced cocoa drink. "Aztec king Montezuma served it in a golden chalice. It was rare, precious and luscious."

Swiss-British Gina speaks enthusiastically about the visitor experience at her organic vanilla farm in Nevis — a key part of which is the chance to drink vanilla-infused xocolatl, or 'liquid gold'. Things have changed a lot since 2019. Back then, living in Switzerland, Gina couldn't place the 36sq mile volcanic island on the map. But her partner had the chance to continue his work as a surgeon in St Kitts and Nevis, so the couple visited the dual-island nation and became so enchanted with it, Gina decided to give up her Geneva-based accountancy firm and emigrate. And, inspired by a vanilla farm she'd visited with her daughter in Costa Rica, she began compiling a business plan.

"For vanilla growth, you need a latitude between 20 degrees north and 20 degrees south," Gina explains. "And Nevis is 17.4 north, which begged the question: why was no one growing it here? I got talking to a local, Barbara Fischman, who believed she'd seen it growing within a sheltered valley. We went searching, and there it was."

After starting in her garden with three cuttings, Gina cultivated about 600 vanilla plants before establishing Vanilla Paradise in early 2023. Today, she and three employees oversee 1,700 lush emerald vines, growing either under the protection of shade houses or beneath the forest canopy. Visitors can explore the estate on a 'discovery trail', and there are plans to open a cafe selling vanilla-infused food and drink as part of a visitor centre.

The site is on the flanks of Nevis Peak, the island's highest point. At an altitude of 600ft, it benefits from high humidity, abundant sunlight and fertile soil. Here, visitors learn about the discovery of vanilla by the Aztecs, and sip on xocolatl, the drink that spurred Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés to bring vanilla to Europe.

Without the help of Mexico's endangered Melipona bee, the vanilla orchid requires hand pollination using a toothpick to produce pods — the seed-filled fruit often referred to as vanilla beans. "You should've seen me," Gina says, recalling the early days. "I had my partner's magnifying glasses on with a step-by-step YouTube video playing. Now I can do it with my eyes closed."

Vanilla Paradise can be visited by appointment. vanilla-paradise-nevis.com Lucy McGuire

HOW TO USE IT

Vanilla rice

A fragrant dish of rice mixed with pitted dates, grated lemon zest, fennel seeds, coconut (dried or fresh) and vanilla, it's a great accompaniment to curries or stews.

Vanilla rum pound cake

This dessert is moist, rich and delicately infused with vanilla in three forms: pod, extract and sugar. The addition of rum provides an extra layer of flavour.

Mahi mahi with vanilla sauce

This unexpected but luxurious pairing involves serving mahi mahi — or any other firm white fish — with a cream, vanilla and white wine-based sauce.

WINE

Grüner & beyond

KNOWN FOR ITS AROMATIC WHITES, AUSTRIA ALSO HAS OUTSTANDING SWEET WINES, REDS AND FIELD BLENDS, ALL BEST ENJOYED IN A RURAL TAVERN. WORDS: FIONA BECKETT

I first came across Austrian wine around 30 years ago in San Francisco, of all places, at a restaurant called The Slanted Door that served Vietnamese food, with which I was equally unfamiliar. I was blown away by a fresh, peppery white called grüner veltliner — a wine made from a grape of the same name — along with how well it suited the dishes we'd ordered.

Since then, it's become hugely popular. Almost every supermarket has an own-label grüner and it's still my go-to with most Southeast Asian food. Although it accounts for a third of Austrian wine production — approximately 70% of which is white — grüner is not the only type in town. Austria also produces world-class riesling, generally drier than those from Germany, along with some stunning sauvignon blancs and chardonnays, the latter known locally as morillon. Then there are some seductively soft, supple reds made mainly from zweigelt

(the most widely planted red variety) and sumptuous, sweet blaufränkisch wines (Austria has its own protected designation of origin, Ruster Ausbruch). Add to this the sparkling wines, known in Germany as 'sekt', it's hard to avoid the conclusion that Austria has it all.

Not to mention it has one of the most alluring wine tourism destinations on the outskirts of Vienna. On a balmy summer evening, there's nothing better than heading up into the hills and sitting in one of the many heurigers. These taverns serve the local wiener gemischter satz, or 'Viennese field blend', the official term for the light, aromatic white wines made from grapes that are randomly intermingled in a vineyard — the traditional way of planting before vineyards were devoted to a single variety.

Other Austrian regions to look out for are Burgenland, traditionally the source of some of the best reds and sweet wines; Wachau, largely for grüner and riesling; and Styria,

which has some of the most stunning full-flavoured sauvignon blancs.

Wherever you go in the country, it's hard to overstate Austrians' passion for wine. Which is why the 1980s scandal, during which a number of its wineries were found to have adulterated their wines with diethylene glycol (an ingredient used in antifreeze), must have cut them to the quick. However, nothing of the kind has happened since, and the quality consistently increases. Indeed, Austrian wines remain one of the most reliable options on restaurant wine lists.

A comparatively high proportion — as much as 24% — of the country's vineyards are certified organic or biodynamic, and you'll tend to find these wines in many of the capital's coolest restaurants and wine bars. But if a weekend away isn't on the cards, Newcomer Wines in Dalston, east London, specialises in Austrian varieties and runs tasting sessions.

FIVE TO TRY



Waitrose No 1 Grüner Veltliner 2023/4

Waitrose, an early adopter of grüner veltliner, has a classic peppery example in its No 1 range, made by the excellent Markus Huber (who features on other own-brand labels). Great with Vietnamese food but also perfect with schnitzel. £12. [waitrose.com](https://www.waitrose.com)



Weingut Bründlmayer Kamptal Riesling Terrassen 2022/3

Austria's rieslings are among its best and costliest wines. This organic example — fruity but piercingly sharp and intense — is well worth the price. Drink it with spiced Asian food or smoked salmon. £23.95. [bbr.com](https://www.bbr.com)



Unearthed Gemischter Satz 2024

It's hugely enterprising of Aldi to have recently taken on this field blend of different white grape varieties. These combinations create a fresh, aromatic wine to sip as an aperitif or enjoy with dim sum or spicy snacks. £8.99. [aldi.co.uk](https://www.aldi.co.uk)



The Society's Austrian Red 2023

This juicy and eminently affordable wine, based on the native zweigelt grape, is the perfect introduction to Austrian reds. Swig it at a barbecue, sip it with salami or enjoy it with pizza — it goes with practically anything. £9.50. [thewinesociety.com](https://www.thewinesociety.com)



Jurtschitsch Brut Rosé Klassik

Another wine based on zweigelt, this time a fruity sekt — the sparkling rosé that's Austria's answer to pink champagne. Have it outdoors on a summer evening, ideally in Vienna, and all will be right with the world. £34. [newcomerwines.com](https://www.newcomerwines.com)



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MANON FLEURY

THE PIONEER





WORKING CLOSELY WITH PRODUCERS AND RUNNING A FEMALE-LED KITCHEN ARE CENTRAL TO MANON FLEURY'S MICHELIN-STARRED PARIS RESTAURANT, DATIL.
WORDS: KYRA ALESSANDRINI

Manon Fleury approaches being a chef the same way she does fencing. "Gastronomy is often presented as a job in which you compete against others — but in reality, it's not at all," says Fleury, who, prior to opening her Paris restaurant Datil, was a member of the French fencing team. Demanding schedules, adrenaline and the ultimate satisfaction that comes with success can be found in both disciplines. But it's teamwork that's important above all else. "What I advocate for at Datil is helping one another, kindness and respect — values that can also be found in sports — while going above and beyond, a requirement in upscale gastronomy."

Building a healthy work environment was one of the main concerns when Datil opened in 2023. Although the kitchen follows a hierarchy for practical reasons, Datil has five co-chefs — all women — with Fleury and Laurène Barjhoux acting as the kitchen's main leads. The aim has always been to strive towards a flatter structure and away from the traditional pyramid of titles and responsibilities. "Our goal was for people to feel good when they come into work at Datil, which hasn't been the case in a lot of restaurants," Fleury says. Stress and the pressure to succeed come with the job, but forms of humiliation and harassment over culinary missteps are also commonplace in the industry, she adds.

In 2021, Fleury co-founded Bondir.e, an organisation that works to prevent violence in professional kitchens. It's also no coincidence she chose to build an almost exclusively female team at Datil. "There are a lot of women interested in this line of work who lose confidence at a certain point, who tell themselves it isn't possible to work in this field. I wanted to show that it is," she says.

The chef got her first taste of gastronomy growing up in Burgundy with her two older brothers and parents, when she would spend summers with her grandmother, who owned orchards. "I remember the smell of ripe fruit on tarpaulins, under the trees," Fleury says. "Apples, pears, quinces, mirabelle plums and blackberries were abundant, along with nuts, once summer had turned to autumn," she adds.

When Fleury entered Ferrandi Paris hospitality school, she often heard she would have to choose between her career and personal life. "It's not a job women were encouraged to do, yet they did it at home," she says. Despite this, she joined Alexandre Couillon's team at La Marine restaurant in Noirmoutiers and Pascal Barbot's L'Astrance, back in Paris.

Later, Fleury headed to New York, where she worked at Dan Barber's farm-to-table restaurant Blue Hill at Stone Barns. But it wasn't until the age of 27, when she became a chef at Le Mermoz in Paris, that critics and

A leek and kiwi dish at Datil
 Right: Manon Fleury has
 worked to create a less
 hierarchical kitchen



The team at Datil
Right: A mignardise
comprising a madeleine
and stuffed prune

culinary connoisseurs began to see her as a star chef in the making. It was also there that she developed a style in which vegetables took centre stage.

When she was growing up, Fleury's parents would pick up seasonal produce at markets and prioritised cooking with organic ingredients. This is reflected on the menu at Datil, which features produce sourced exclusively in France from independent suppliers. Not only does this help limit the restaurant's carbon footprint, it also creates direct rapport and an ongoing collaboration with farmers, seaweed harvesters and animal breeders.

Citrus fruits are mainly sourced through a fourth-generation nursery grower in Occitanie who focuses on agroecology. Fleury also works with several vegetable farmers, including one based in Île-de-France, who uses self-irrigation powered by rainwater. The fish largely comes from a Pays de la Loire-based fisherman who uses handmade traps to catch crab, lobster and shrimp. These collaborations are at the core of Datil's approach. "The gastronomy we offer wouldn't be the same if we didn't know where our produce was coming from," Fleury says. "These are our raw materials and the relationship of trust we have with the people we work with is truly enriching."

Fleury sees Datil as the culmination of all her previous experiences. The restaurant's name is a reference to a type of plum, a fruit with which she has had an affinity since her youth and was a core ingredient in one of her grandmother's signature tarts. There are other nods to childhood on the menu. One playful dessert is served in a lemon, cut open to reveal lemon sorbet blended with Jerusalem artichokes. A madeleine, meanwhile, is another tribute to Fleury's grandmother. Diners are invited to use their hands or spoon, like they might at home,

highlighting the chef's desire to find comfort in the physicality of food.

Last winter, the team created a dish centred around poularde (a type of chicken) raised in the French department of Sarthe for 120 days. It was complemented with endives, balancing out the fattiness of the poultry with something bitter. "We sought out this seasonal vegetable to layer underneath, which also came about from our thinking process concerning the balancing of flavours," says Fleury. French peanuts, apples and a lemon condiment are layered within the endive before it's caramelised and candied.

Fleury highlights the importance of giving meaning to each step at Datil — from building an environment in which chefs and employees can thrive to upholding an environmentally conscious approach. "There needs to be meaning in what we do," she says. "It's not just about food. We are part of a very elitist side of gastronomy that may be criticised for its [lack of] usefulness," she says. "We have a role to play when it comes to sustainability."

Shortly after Datil received a Michelin star in March 2024, news of Fleury's almost entirely female team of chefs became the subject of debate. She remembers hearing accusations of discrimination against men. "I didn't expect it to be so surprising to have a team centring mainly on women in 2024," she says, noting that there are in fact some men on her team at the restaurant. "[Having a female-led kitchen] is a commitment that's needed in order for progress to be made, because this field is still very male-dominated," Fleury says. She'd like to see more women represented in gastronomy — not solely by awarding them Michelin stars, but also by them starting their own projects and daring to be ambitious. Because, she says, "today, it's still not very well regarded to be an ambitious woman". 🍷



Signature dishes

MIGNARDISES

The mignardises are miniature pastries that conclude the dining experience at Datil. In a play on the name of the restaurant, each one features some variation of the datil plum and how it's prepared. Last winter, the madeleine, which is often made with dried prune, was filled with apple compote. The 'Infusion' mignardise has been a mainstay since the restaurant's opening and is made with almonds and plum stones.

AMUSE-BOUCHES

Datil's amuse-bouches consistently include a broth, a flan inspired by Japanese chawanmushi (steam-cooked savoury egg custard) and a vegetable fritter similar to tempura. The latter is made using vegetable flour such as green lentil, corn, squash or cabbage, depending on the season. French ceramist Judith Lasry has created custom-made dishes to elevate the presentation of each morsel.


RICE STEW

The restaurant's rice stew has become a recurring dish on the changing menu. The rice is cooked with other types of cereals and vegetables, which vary depending on the season. "It could come with mushrooms in the winter and peas in the spring," Fleury says. In spring 2024, for example, the rice stew was served with radish sourced from an organic farm in Essonne, as well as strawberries and a colourful arrangement of edible flowers.



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JESS & JO EDUN (THE FLYGERIANS)

SUNDAY 20 JULY

ANDI OLIVER
JOSÉ PIZARRO
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GREECE

dish by dish

Greek food sings of the summer — it's best enjoyed outside, from mainland mountaintops to island beaches. Mezze spreads celebrate punchy purple olives, garlicky dips and herb-sprinkled cheese, while salads of sun-ripened tomatoes, tangy feta and fragrant oregano are perfect with just-landed grilled fish or slow-stewed legumes cooked in outdoor ovens following recipes that date back to antiquity. From Macedonia in the north to Crete in the south, we explore the country via its standout dishes

WORDS: HELEN IATROU & ANASTASIA MIARI

pastitsada, corfu

Fragrant with cloves, cumin and cinnamon, this pasta dish arrived on the Ionian island of Corfu with 14th-century Venetian spice traders and has since become rooted in the local cuisine. On Sundays across the island, the air carries its heady scent. Words: Anastasia Miari

As a child, Sunday mornings were spent in the kitchen of my yiayia. My Greek grandmother — or yiayia — cooked in the whitewashed shack built by my grandfather to keep the scent of frying fish and spices away from the main house. Cloves and cinnamon spiked the air as a rich tomato sauce and beef short ribs simmered away, cooking for hours before the pasta it would be served with — thick bucatini or penne to soak up the richly spiced sauce — went into a separate pot.

Pastitsada or ‘la pastizzada’ as the island’s Venetian colonisers called it, is a dish that’s been representative of Corfu for hundreds of years. Slow-cooked meat — beef, rabbit, rooster or, on occasion, octopus — is stewed in a deep-red tomato sauce for hours, flavoured with the island’s signature spetseriko spice mix. The combination of spices varies from household to household, but invariably contains cinnamon and cloves along with nutmeg, allspice, cumin and several more besides. It’s then served atop a pile of pasta — again we have our Italian neighbours to thank for this — alongside a customary Greek salad topped with a block of feta.

In that dingy kitchen, I’d watch Yiayia’s face, creased like the bark of an olive tree, hovering over a pot of bubbling tomato sauce. Sunday lunch was a spiritual experience; a time to truly appreciate the culinary magic that can be conjured with the simplest of ingredients.

Found in tavernas, restaurants and — more importantly — households across the island, pastitsada has a distinct flavour profile that scents the air as you stroll around Corfu’s mountain villages or the cobbled alleyways of its Venetian old town. Like most of our illustrious ‘native’ dishes, pastitsada is a credit to the Venetians and their trading power across the Mediterranean and the Middle East. They put the island on the spice trail more than 500 years ago when they colonised it, passing through the surrounding aquamarine

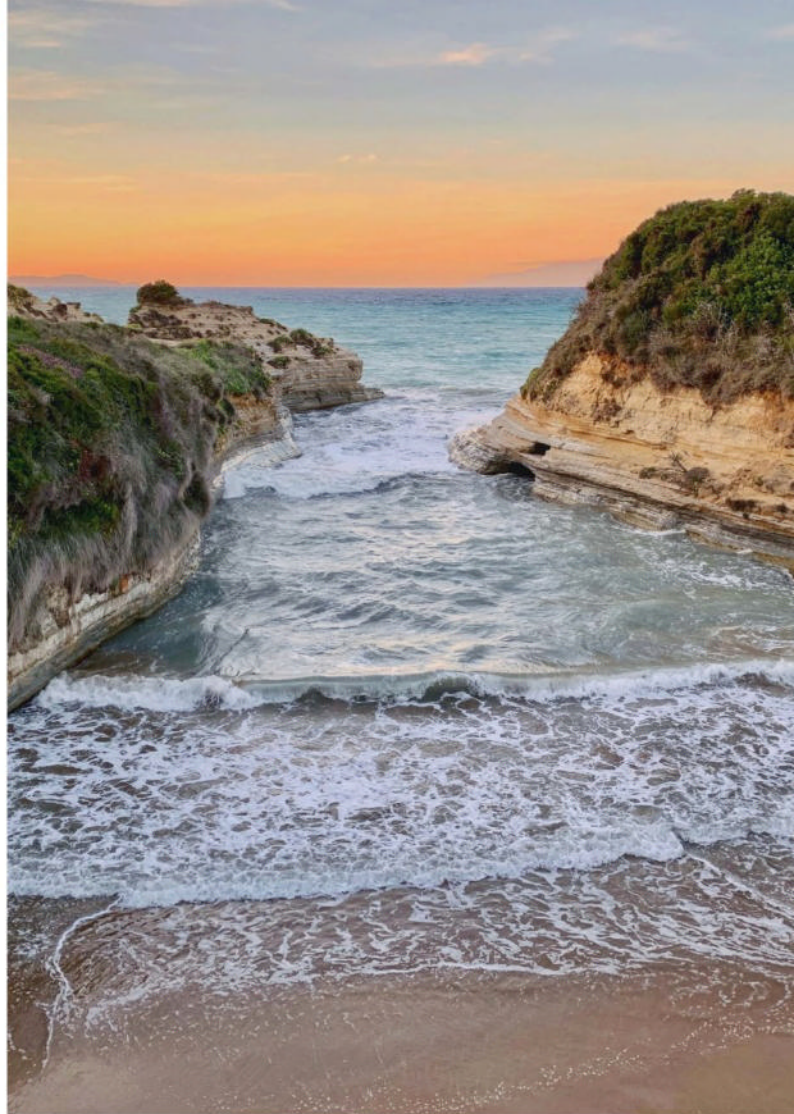
waters, forging commercial ties between Corfu and Dubrovnik — another Venetian outpost. With them they brought powdered red pepper — both sweet and hot — and should you travel to Croatia’s Dalmatian coastline, you’ll find the same dish, known locally as pašticada and served with gnocchi instead of pasta.

“My own yiayia followed the seasons with her ingredients and her food was always consistent in taste and generally very good,” says chef Spyros Agious, when I visit The Venetian Well in Corfu Town. Framed by tendrils of bougainvillea, his fine-dining restaurant is set around a centuries-old well in a quiet courtyard near the sea. “What I appreciated over time, and as a professional chef, is the slow cooking,” he says. “The way Yiayia sauteed the onion very slowly until it was perfectly caramelised. The result goes to another level of taste. I also learnt to find beauty in simplicity and in the quality of seasonal produce on my own island.”

While my yiayia is a ‘throw it in a pot and walk away’ kind of cook, Corfu’s most talented chefs spend years perfecting their versions of pastitsada. Chef Agious’s ravioli with cockerel is perhaps the most exquisite variation I’ve encountered. It’s served with a cream of graviera cheese, artichoke chips and hazelnut, each pasta parcel a delectable combination of flavours and textures that sings with a signature Corfu spice mix.

Driving south along the coastal road from Corfu Town, past mountains dense with olive trees and hilltop villages painted in the island’s blushing pastel tones, I arrive at Klimataria — or Bellos as it’s better known by locals — a blink-and-miss-it restaurant in the former fishing village of Benitses. The owner, Nikos Bellos, is the kind of old-school Corfiot who believes in simplicity and sticking with tradition — and will insist that every last scrap of food on your plate is eaten before he whisks it away. But I’m here to cook octopus

Clockwise from top left:
A street in the town of Paleokastritsa, west Corfu; beautiful sunsets and sandy beaches are characteristic of Corfu’s southwest coast; Lily Bellos’s pastitsada; Lily at home in Benitses
Previous pages: Lunch under olive trees in Crete



GREECE

pastitsada with his wife, Lily, to feature in my cookbook. Nikos looms over the kitchen, ready to catch us deviating from the recipe. The dish is both a signature of the island and of Klimataria — and he insists that actually, the only necessary seasoning is spicy paprika.

The other ingredients in the Bellos pastitsada are olive oil (and lots of it), onions, tomato puree and octopus. While it's rustic, with whole octopus tentacles and the deep red sauce piled atop spaghetti, these humble ingredients are elevated thanks to slow cooking and clever flavour balancing. It results in me — and apparently numerous other diners — gasping and voicing superlatives like “this is the best meal I’ve eaten in Greece.”

Cookbook author and restaurant owner Vasiliki Karounou takes a slightly different approach for the pastitsada she serves at Ambelonas, in the grounds of a 400-year-old Venetian estate. Like the rest of the menu here, her version is the dish is inspired by her mother-in-law, whose handwritten recipe book, filled with forgotten island recipes, provided Vasiliki with all she needed to know about traditional Corfiot cuisine.

In contrast to Nikos's simple one-spice pastitsada, Karounou does as my yiayia might and combines seven spices — cinnamon, nutmeg, cumin, allspice, hot red chilli, sweet red chilli and black peppercorns — to marinate a beef rump or shoulder, which cooks for several hours. “The sauce must be very thick, spicy and served very hot,” says Vasiliki, who also insists on using fresh tomato alongside tomato paste.

We Corfiots are snobs when it comes to our gastronomy — an attitude that stems not from cherished recipes, but from our primary ingredients. The most verdant of all the Greek islands, lush with wildflowers where others are sun-scorched, Corfu is blessed with rainfall in winter that sees produce flourish. Tomatoes, sweet and plentiful, taste of sunshine. So, while we have the Venetians to thank for the spices, as my yiayia says, Corfu is blessed with fertile ground — which is what brought the Venetians here in the first place.

WHERE TO TRY IT: The Venetian Well, Klimataria and Ambelonas each put their own spin on the dish. venetianwell.gr klimataria-restaurant.gr ambelonas-corfu.gr

WHERE TO STAY: The Olivar Suites in Messonghi has double rooms from €230 (£193), B&B, and a restaurant, Flya, with a menu of local produce and traditional dishes. olivarsuites.gr

Clockwise from top left: Corfu's olives are a prized Greek crop; The White Tower in Thessaloniki; skordalia, a dip made from bread or potatoes and garlic; a street in Kérkyra (Corfu Town)





skordalia, macedonia

This potent garlic dip is served throughout Greece, but its most prized version is found in the northern region of Macedonia

When does the dish date back to?

Ancient Megara, a region of central Greece, on the Corinth Isthmus, was famous for its garlic and onion production in the fifth century BCE. Greece's first skordalia is believed to have its origins in these ancient times, when it was known as mittotos and comprised garlic, olive oil, boiled leeks, egg and fresh cheese.

Today, skordalia shows a similar reverence for the edible bulb, the recipe combining garlic, olive oil, salt and lemon or vinegar, with either boiled potatoes or stale white crustless bread. The pungent garlic dip is a staple of every Greek home and almost all tavernas throughout the country.

How is it made?

Every region does it differently. In the Ionian Islands, for example, Venetian rule is evident in the regional creamy, potato-based skordalia known as aliada, taken from aglio, the Italian word for garlic. Dimitris Leloudas, owner of Leloudas, a humble taverna opened by his grandfather in the working-class Athenian neighbourhood of Votanikos in 1928, tends to

serve the classic bread-based rendition. "Our former cook, Anna, described it as the poor man's skordalia, while she considered the one with potato to be the rich man's choice," he says. "Everyone had bread at home, but not everyone could buy potatoes. The bread version has a slightly more intense flavour."

What about other regional variations?

In Macedonia, skordalia was traditionally made with walnuts. But the rising cost of nuts has made this variation a rarity. If you do find the dish done this way, it's most likely to be in the regional capital, Thessaloniki, at the fish tavernas of Kalamaria or the mezedopolia — tapas bar-like venues serving mezze — in Ladadika.

In Athens, walnut skordalia remains a staple on the menu of Konstandina Stavropoulou's homely fish taverna Thalassinos. "When crushed, walnuts release essential oils that balance out the flavours of the garlic and olive oil," she says. "It has quite a robust taste."

Pistachios and almonds have also made appearances as co-stars in versions of this

versatile garlic dip by Athens-born chef Carolina Doriti. You'll find recipes in *Salt of the Earth: Secrets and Stories from a Greek Kitchen*, where it features as a punchy accompaniment to roasted beetroot.

What else does the dish go with?

Skordalia is inextricably linked with Greek Independence Day, celebrated on 25 March, when the dip is served with crisp-fried salt-cured Atlantic cod, known as bakaliaro. Coinciding with the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, this marks one of two occasions during Greek Orthodox Lent when the faithful are permitted to break the 40-day fast, both times with fish. **HI**

WHERE TO TRY IT: Sample salt cod fritters with two types of skordalia — walnut and beetroot — at Thessaloniki restaurant Maiami. maiamichef.gr

WHERE TO STAY: Matriarch Mrs Loulou pairs walnut skordalia with fried cod, mussels or courgettes at Akroyiali, a seaside taverna dating to 1924, which forms part of family-run Hotel Liotopi in northeastern Halkidiki. Doubles from €131 (£110), half board.



masourakia, chios

These sweet treats are flavoured with thyme honey or mandarin and the distinctive, aromatic resin from local mastic trees

On Greece's northeastern Aegean island of Chios, mastiha is king. Said since the fifth century BCE to aid digestion, this aromatic resin is gently coaxed by hand from mastic trees that grow in the south of the island. It has myriad uses, from chewing gum to face cream, while studies have found evidence of anti-inflammatory and antioxidative properties. Many know it as a digestif but, in Chios, its bitter-sweet, herbal flavour has long enhanced local desserts and pastries. And masourakia, buttered filo almond pastries, are by far the local favourite.

Anna Moniodi, born in the mastiha-producing village of Tholopotami, says home cooks created masourakia around 1965. And, soon enough, the filo-wrapped tubes of almond and mastiha found their way to patisseries like Moniodis, owned by her family.

"Masourakia are unique to Chios. You can't find them anywhere else," Anna says. Due to their shape, they're believed to have taken their name from the Greek word for spool.

"Traditionally, masourakia were served to guests at weddings and baptisms with a glass of soumada, a local drink made from bitter almond. But it's really an everyday sweet," she adds.

Chians widely agree that Moniodis, which opened in 1963, makes the island's finest version of this dainty delicacy. Any day you visit one of their two shops you'll encounter trays of neatly stacked masourakia ready to be packed in the patisserie's characteristic cherry-red boxes adorned with an almond blossom design.

"No one leaves Chios without picking up masourakia to take as a gift to family or friends in Greece or abroad," says Anna. "You'll see people carrying boxes on the plane and ferry."

Like many traditional Greek desserts, the recipe sounds deceptively simple. "You can find recipes for them," Anna says. "But they're hard to make at home."

Chios has long been known for its excellent almonds, so it makes sense that many local

sweets feature this ingredient. Masourakia are no exception. While almond trees are fewer in number today, Anna says the nuts can still be sourced locally, or from elsewhere in Greece.

There are three types of masourakia on offer at Moniodis, all made with almond. Mastiha flavours the original version, its filo exterior dusted liberally with icing sugar. The classic take is dipped in a Chian thyme honey syrup and coated in a thick layer of finely chopped almond. Local mandarin adds zing to a third, equally popular version. **HI**

WHERE TO TRY IT: Take your pick from Moniodis' masourakia, which come individually wrapped, or sample all three flavours. Track them down at one of two locations in Chios town (at 26 Voupalou St and 4 Psychari St). [instagram.com/moniodis_patisserie](https://www.instagram.com/moniodis_patisserie)

WHERE TO STAY: Pearl Island Chios Hotel & Spa, often offers sweet masourakia as a welcome at check-in. Doubles from €153 (£128) per night, B&B. [pearl island.gr](https://www.pearl island.gr)



bakaliaros plaki, peloponnese

Once known as the 'mountain fish' recipe, this can also be a plentiful vegan dish with an extra potato and red pepper in place of seafood. This recipe comes from Kalamata native Yiayia Niki, who has been making it this way for decades

SERVES: 4-6 **TAKES: 1 HR, PLUS OVERNIGHT**
SOAKING FOR SALT COD

INGREDIENTS

1kg plain or salt cod fillets
oregano, for sprinkling
500g good-quality tomatoes (if they're not in season, use 1 heaped tbsp tomato paste)
120ml olive oil
2 medium red onions, roughly chopped
3 large garlic cloves
3 medium to large potatoes (around 600g in total)
1 cinnamon stick
½ tsp whole peppercorns
5 allspice seeds
5 cloves
4 bay leaves
100g Greek currants
1 red pepper, roughly chopped
bunch of fresh parsley, chopped with stems

METHOD

- 1 If using salt cod, desalinate overnight in a bowl of water, rinsing several times. The next day, run each fillet under a cold tap and squeeze the water out. For plain cod, ignore this step.
 - 2 Lay the fish flat in an ovenproof dish or tray, sprinkle with oregano and set aside. Preheat oven to 200C, fan 180C. Chop the tomatoes, if using, into quarters and set aside for later. Add the olive oil, onions, garlic and potatoes to a large nonstick frying pan with a lid.
 - 3 Sizzle on high while you add the cinnamon, peppercorns, allspice seeds, cloves, bay leaves and currants. Add the red pepper, a sprinkle of oregano and 80ml water, then cover and allow to steam, stirring occasionally so the potatoes don't stick.
 - 3 After 10 mins, add the tomatoes or tomato paste, allow to cook for a further 2 mins with the lid on, then remove from the heat and pour over the cod in the oven dish. Sprinkle half the chopped parsley (with stems) into the dish and add a final top-up of around 50ml of water and bake for 40 mins.
 - 4 Garnish with the remaining chopped parsley and serve with a slice of bread to soak up the juices.
- Taken from Yiayia: Time-perfected Recipes from Greece's Grandmothers, by Anastasia Miari (£27, Hardie Grant Books).*



Yiayia Niki in the Mani Peninsula, Peloponnese
From left: mastic tree in Chios; Yiayia Niki's dish of bakaliaros plaki



datterini tomato salad, crete

Popular on Crete, dakos is a Greek salad variant with a barley rusk. This take on the classic recipe — a carob rusk-crowned version with mizithra cheese, tomato and capers — is from the chefs at London's OMA restaurant. Sourcing quality ingredients, notably sweet tomatoes and proper mizithra rather than feta cheese, will make a big difference to this dish. Carob rusks can be brought online or from shops stocking Greek produce

SERVES: 4 SIDE DISHES **TAKES: 20 MINS**

INGREDIENTS

450g datterini vine tomatoes
30g spring onions, finely sliced
20g capers
80g carob rusk
80g mizithra cheese
½ tsp dried oregano

FOR THE DRESSING

80g Greek extra virgin olive oil
30g good-quality balsamic vinegar
½ tsp flaky sea salt

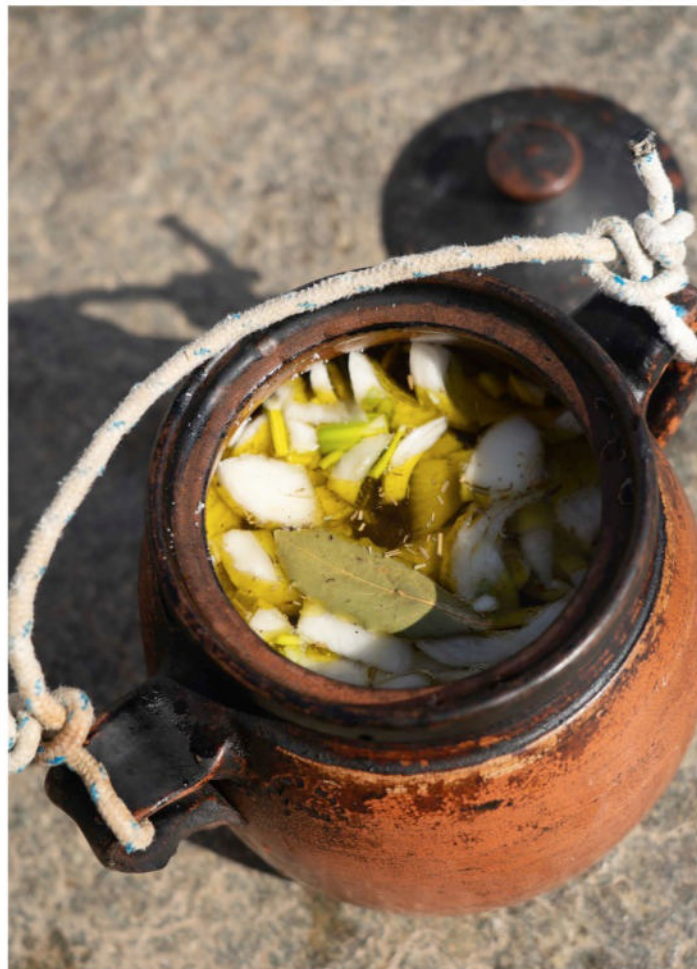
METHOD

- 1 Slice the datterini vine tomatoes in half lengthways and add to a mixing bowl. Add the spring onions, capers and half the carob rusk broken up into bite-sized pieces.
- 2 Combine the dressing ingredients in a small jar and shake. Pour over the tomato mixture and lightly toss. Add to a serving bowl and top with the mizithra cheese and the other half of the carob rusks, and sprinkle with the dried oregano.
- 3 When serving, mix well so the cheese coats everything and emulsifies into the dressing. oma.london



Quality tomatoes are crucial to a good dakos salad
Clockwise from top left: datterini tomato salad from OMA restaurant in London; Chatzimichali Ntaliani Street in Chania's old town, Crete; local cook Maro, at To Maro apartments; Maro's revithada, ready for cooking





revithada, sifnos

This one-pot chickpea stew is cooked in a wood-burning oven, in a specially designed bowl hewn from the rich clay deposits on this wind-blown Cyclades island

Thanks to its rich clay deposits, Sifnos has become known as an island for ceramicists. Clay pots have been used to cook with for centuries resulting in dishes native to this wind-battered island, unique to the vessel in which they're slow-baked. None is more Sifnian than revithada — a baked chickpea stew traditionally served on Sundays and made in a skepastaria, the small clay bowl dedicated to its cooking.

Left in a wood-burning oven overnight, the ultra-soft chickpeas are infused with lemon and bay leaves, and these few ingredients achieve a perfectly comforting dish that sings with the zing of local citrus.

What makes revithada so special is the time that goes into cooking it. Local cook Maro, owner of To Maro boutique apartments, stresses the importance of baking on a low

heat for a number of hours. She makes hers, sometimes for guests in the garden outside the holiday rental in Kastro, over an open flame in her specially built outdoor oven.

"When I was growing up, many of the men on the island were potters," says Maro. "That left the women to farm the land and the children at home to prepare dinner. That's how I learned to cook revithada myself, from the age of seven. "Even on a Sunday, our parents would leave the house by donkey to go out and work while the revithada baked slowly, until they returned home."

So, in Sifnos, this is not a dish you might throw together midweek after work. It was born to feed a family when there was more time to prepare food — so, usually on Sundays — and slow-cooked. The flavours of the onion, bay and olive oil suffuse into a hearty meal

that only needs a slice of myzithra or feta cheese, a couple of olives and hunk of bread to create a satisfyingly wholesome lunch. **AM**

WHERE TO TRY IT: To Steki, in the bay of Platis Gialos, serves revithada alongside other Sifnian claypot-baked dishes such as beef stewed in a rich red wine sauce. Set almost on the water, this favoured local spot has its own vegetable garden, which provides most of its organic produce.

facebook.com/tostekisifnos

WHERE TO STAY: To Maro has apartments from €45 (£38), room only. maro-sifnos.gr

Verina Hotel Sifnos offers the opportunity to try your hand at the potter's wheel. The hotel organises classes in one of Sifnos's oldest clay pottery studios, alongside revithada cooking workshops. Doubles from €253 (£212) per night, B&B. verinahotelsifnos.com



Savoury & nutty & earthy & umami

Tempeh, a protein-rich block of fermented soybeans, is a beloved ingredient in Indonesian cooking. On the island of Lombok you'll find it used in everything — even desserts

WORDS: LEYLA ROSE. PHOTOGRAPHS: MARTIN WESTLAKE



“Tempeh brownies,” chef Froosh Nur announces as he places a plate down in front of me.

I’m not sure how this is going to work. I’ve never tried tempeh in sweet form before, but these don’t look any different to normal brownies, and as I sink my teeth in, a familiar chocolatey taste emerges. The texture is perfectly moist and gooey; a delicate crunch comes not from nuts, but from the soybeans in the tempeh.

Originally from Kerala in Southern India, Froosh moved to the Indonesian island of Lombok last year to take up the position of head chef at The Sira, one of the many high-end resorts that line the palm-fringed turquoise coast in the island’s quieter northwest corner, between the Bali Sea and the imposing slopes of Mount Rinjani, which dominates the Lombok landscape. At 12,224ft, it’s Indonesia’s second-tallest volcano, with pristine primary rainforest running down its slopes, stopping abruptly at the lush, green rice terraces that tumble down into little settlements in river valleys. Further south, there’s a distinctly arid feel to the rugged coastline as it’s buffeted by the waves of the Indian Ocean.

Froosh’s first encounter with tempeh came shortly after he arrived. He’d just finished Friday prayers at the mosque in one of the nearby villages, and some local men were eating fried tempeh with a spicy sambal (chilli condiment). On the encouragement of a colleague, he gave it a taste.

“I didn’t realise it was fermented soybeans. It looked nice, but when I tasted it, I realised this wasn’t something for me. It was not love at first sight,” he says, laughing.

Although I’m Indonesian, I can understand why tempeh is divisive. For one thing, its appearance and structure don’t do it many favours — a bumpy slab of fermented soybeans bound together by a web of white mould. Some find the texture — akin to a knobbly, dense sponge — off-putting, while others aren’t keen on the slight sourness or gentle funk of fermentation. But to dismiss it without getting to know it would be to do it a disservice.

The most popular way of cooking tempeh is the simplest: slice it, soak it in brine to bring out the flavours, then fry it. When prepared this way, it’s savoury, nutty and slightly earthy, with a mushroom-like hint of umami. It’s the perfect side dish to accompany Indonesia’s richly spiced curries, vibrant vegetable dishes and fragrant stews.

At The Sira, Froosh — who’s now a fully paid-up tempeh convert — makes another popular Lombok dish, *tumis tempe*. It involves stir-frying slices of tempeh along with a mix of shallots, garlic, chilli, long beans, carrots and kecap manis, an Indonesian sweet soy sauce. His version is exactly like those cooked in home kitchens across the island, and it’s delicious. The brownies, meanwhile, are somewhat less traditional. “It’s a bit of an experiment to be honest,” says Froosh. “That’s the beauty of tempeh — it’s really versatile because it soaks up the flavour of whatever you’re cooking it with, or in. So I knew if I pureed it, it could work for brownies, enhancing the texture, giving a nice, subtle nutty taste and a boost of protein at the same time.”

Like many foods, tempeh was invented by accident. First documented on the Indonesian island of Java around the 16th century, it seems to have come about when some cooked soybeans were left out in the hot and humid climate. The result? Fermentation. A taste for these fermented beans spread across the Indonesian archipelago, from Java to Bali to the current-day Nusa Tenggara Barat province, where Lombok is situated. Tempeh has since become a staple source of protein throughout the country, and until recently was relatively little-known elsewhere in the world, although that’s starting to change — particularly among plant-based diners.

For Devi, head chef at Warung Ijo, tempeh is a hero ingredient. “It’s so cheap yet so tasty, and packed with protein,” she tells me over a simmering curry in her kitchen in the tourist town of Senggigi, around 12 miles down the

Clockwise from top left: Tempeh sushi at Terra; surfers at Kuta’s Seger Beach in the early morning; freshly harvested chillies are prepared at Asano; chef Froosh Nur began experimenting with tempeh after moving to Lombok. Previous pages: A selection of tempeh dishes at The Sira





coast from The Sira. She's right; it contains around 20g of protein per 100g, compared to tofu's 8g or the 9g in lentils. It's also rich in fibre and minerals such as magnesium, calcium and phosphorus, and low in saturated fat.

It helps that it's easy to make. A fungus, either *Rhizopus oligosporus* or *Rhizopus oryzae* (also known as a tempeh starter), is added to cooked and dehulled soybeans. The mixture is then spread into a thin layer and left to ferment for 24 to 36 hours at around 30C. Mycelium — the fuzzy, thread-like 'roots' of fungus often found on blue cheese or salami — then forms, binding the soybeans together and providing a slightly fermented taste.

Devi, who's been running Warung Ijo for the past 12 years, tells me tempe daun, or 'leaf tempeh', is her favourite variety. It's made using an old-school method, which involves wrapping the tempeh ingredients in banana leaves to ferment. "It's more flavourful. It has this nice aroma, and it lasts much longer than the plastic-wrapped tempeh that's more common these days," she says, nodding enthusiastically.

Warung Ijo is a simple establishment with a few low dining tables arranged lesehan-style — an Indonesian way of eating cross-legged on the floor. Senggigi is a small coastal town in the west of the island, and while it's past its heyday as Lombok's original tourist hotspot — the

masses have moved on to the Gili Islands in the north and Kuta in the south — the expansive resorts and palm-dotted beach still draw in a healthy number of visitors. Warung Ijo is my local lunch spot, popular with both locals and tourists alike — and at just past midday there are a few customers, including a group of German tourists and an Indonesian couple waiting for a takeaway.

I grab a plate and pile it high, picking from an enticing buffet comprising 20 different dishes — fish, meat and veggie. The tempe manis ('sweet tempeh') is one of my favourites. Sliced very thinly into little squares, the tempeh is fried and tossed with a sambal that coats it like caramel, making it super crunchy and savoury, a slight sweetness coming from the kecap manis.

Devi is thrilled whenever she sees Western visitors trying Indonesian cuisine for the first time. "Many of them already know what tempeh is, but those who don't almost always like it after trying," she says. It's indicative of the change I've witnessed in Lombok over the past decade. Before then, the island didn't really have much of a food scene. There were only warungs (local restaurants), like this one, catering to Indonesians. Those that did entice foreign customers tended only to offer basic local dishes such as fried rice or noodles, as well as poor imitations of Western food.

Tempe daun, or 'leaf tempeh', is made by wrapping the ingredients in banana leaves to ferment

From left: Freshly cut raw tempeh at Warung Ijo; a waiter walks through The Sira's restaurant in the late afternoon sun; chef Mamiko Eda prepares tempeh sushi in the kitchen at Terra

"Indonesian cuisine never really took off internationally the same way that Thai, Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian cuisines have done," reflects Froosh. "I think it has something to do with immigration. Indonesians are very family-orientated and tend to stay close to home, whereas you've seen mass migration from other nations, and with that, they exported their food, too. That's why Indonesian food continues to fly under the radar, relatively speaking."

But that's changing. While we may not have exported our cuisine out to the world, the world has come to us. With the skyrocketing number of visitors to Bali, there's been a natural overspill to Lombok, which lies just 25 miles to the east. There's an increase in younger and moneyed travellers, and dining in Lombok has quickly evolved to cater to visitors for whom food is paramount.

Kuta, on the south coast, is the poster child for this change. Once a sleepy surf town, it's sprung into life in recent years, sprawling out from the main crossroads where you'll find modern restaurants offering global cuisines, from Italian and Greek to Mexican and Chinese.

The scene has attracted a diverse array of chefs from all over the world, including Mamiko Eda, head chef at Terra — one of Lombok's few fully vegan restaurants. It's a relaxed, modern affair with low, comfy sofas. A clientele of

digital nomad types tap away at their laptops as they wait for their healthy lunches to arrive, all to a subtle soundtrack of lo-fi jazz.

As a Japanese chef, Mamiko is no stranger to fermented foods — especially soybeans. Ingredients such as natto and miso are part of her everyday life, so tempeh wasn't such a leap. "I came across it when I was at cooking school in Japan," she says. Later, when she was working in the Bali hill town of Ubud, it was very much part of the local cuisine, and now, at Terra, she's putting her own creative spin on it.

In front of me is a plate of sushi rolls incorporating local red rice, kimchi and tempeh marinated with shio koji, a Japanese fermented condiment made from water, rice, salt and koji (a mould used in the production of miso, soy sauce and sake). I use chopsticks to pop one into my mouth, flooding my palate with a complex combination of flavours. There's the familiar saltiness of the seaweed, but instead of the vinegary short-grain white rice typically used for sushi, the red rice adds earthy and nutty notes. Combined with tangy kimchi and the creamy, spicy cashew wasabi sauce, there's layers upon layers in one mouthful.

Next, I try a Thai green curry containing chunks of tempeh, green beans, aubergine, pumpkin and herbs like coriander, curry leaves and lemongrass — all grown in the kitchen garden of Ashtari, Terra's nearby sister

Sri Owen's tempeh rendang

Beef rendang is typically eaten with rice, but the tempeh version is quite filling, so I recommend serving it alongside a green salad with piquant dressing, or with cooked vegetables of your choice. Leftovers can be frozen (add a little more coconut milk when reheating if it's looking too dry), but the recipe is also easily halved.

SERVES: 10 TAKES: 2 HRS

INGREDIENTS

6 shallots, sliced
4 garlic cloves, sliced
5cm piece of fresh ginger, peeled and chopped
5cm piece of fresh turmeric, peeled and chopped
6-10 red chillies, deseeded and chopped
5cm piece of galangal, peeled and chopped
2 litres coconut milk
1.2kg tempeh, cut into 2cm cubes
1-2 salam leaves, bay leaves or kaffir lime (makrut) leaves
1 lemongrass stem, bruised
1 tsp salt, or to taste

METHOD

- 1 Put the shallots, garlic, ginger, turmeric, chillies, galangal and 4 tbsp of the coconut milk in a blender and whizz to a smooth paste.
- 2 Tip the paste into a large saucepan and pour in the rest of the coconut milk, then add the tempeh, salam leaves, lemongrass stem and salt. Stir it all together and bring to a gentle simmer, then cook uncovered for around 1 hr 30 mins — you want a fairly thick sauce that has reduced down substantially.
- 3 Cook the mixture for another 20 mins or so until the sauce has become quite dry and clings to the tempeh; it will be light brown in colour, not the dark brown of a beef rendang. However, if you have the time and want a darker colour, you can continue to cook it, stirring all the time to prevent burning, for a further 20-30 mins. Serve hot, warm or cold.

Taken from Indonesian Food, by Sri Owen (£30, Pavilion).





restaurant. It's fresh and fragrant, the tempeh adding texture and soaking up the delicious curry sauce; as an ingredient it works best when it acts as carrier for big flavours.

What I taste in Mamiko's food is a fusion of different cuisines — but that's hardly new. For centuries, the islands of the Indonesian archipelago have been connected by maritime trade that stoked the world's clamour for spices like nutmeg, cloves and mace, which at one time were worth more than diamonds. I touch on this with Froosh, wondering if there are similarities between Indonesian and Indian cuisine.

"Oh absolutely," he says. "In the 15th and 16th centuries there were princes from my state in India visiting Bali and Java. It turns out I'm 4% Indonesian. There's this chain of trade and communication reaching back 400 years. So, fermentation in South Indian cuisine came from Indonesia. And then the Dutch did their part, introducing chillies and tomatoes. All our cuisines overlap."

Lombok's changing food scene represents a continuation of this trend — the comings and goings of ingredients and influences across Indonesia. And now, it may just be tempeh's time to shine. "It's all about marketing, really," Froosh theorises. "Probiotics are the craze right now, and tempeh is a probiotic product. It's an amazing superfood."

Indeed, an increase in health consciousness is a large reason why fermented, probiotic-rich foods are becoming more popular. Mamiko tells me that during the Covid lockdowns of 2020, she started hosting fermentation classes, making things like kombucha, kefir, tempeh and miso. "Because of the pandemic, I saw more and more people becoming interested in the health benefits of fermented foods, which

include a stronger immune system, better digestion and less inflammation," she says. And in tempeh's case, its versatility is another selling point.

My last stop, Asano, is a local favourite in Mataram, Lombok's capital. This place serves Padang cuisine — known for its thick, rich curry sauces and tasty sambals — which originated in northern Sumatra and is now hugely popular across the country. I'm joining the lunchtime rush, jostling for a place at Asano's serving counter among office workers and food delivery drivers, while scouring the place for an empty table. It's a casual, low-key spot — service is hurried and rarely comes with a smile — and, typically for Padang restaurants, the window is stacked with dishes, showcasing the kind of cuisine on offer.

A brief glance at the buffet reveals the international influences behind Indonesian gastronomy. Beef rendang, a rich and spicy curry also found in Malaysia, has its roots in Indian curries, no doubt brought to Sumatra through maritime trade. Perkedel kentang, meanwhile, are fried potato fritters inspired by Dutch frikadel, while sambal hijau (green sambal) is made with chillies introduced by the Portuguese.

The standout dish, though, features that most Indonesian of ingredients — tempeh. It's sliced impossibly thinly and deep-fried in batter, with a snap and crunch that's incredibly satisfying. As I chat with the owner, Muglis, he tells me this dish was introduced in response to customer demand. "Tempeh isn't actually an essential Padang ingredient — we put it on the menu because people here kept asking for it," he says. "Seems like Lombok has an appetite for tempeh." 🍽️

From left: A mosque on the beach near Sekotong, southwest Lombok; a Padang-style lunch, including crispy tempeh goreng at the top of the plate, at Asano

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE

Singapore Airlines flies from Heathrow to Singapore, from which its low-cost carrier, Scoot, completes the journey to Lombok. Malaysia Airlines flies to Kuala Lumpur, from which AirAsia and Batik Air both fly to Lombok.

WHERE TO STAY

The Sira, a Luxury Collection Resort and Spa, is an all-suite and villa resort on Lombok's northwest coast. Ocean View Suites start at £408 a night, B&B. thesiralombok.com

HOW TO DO IT

Original Travel offers a 13-day Bali and Lombok trip from £3,295 per person. Includes flights, accommodation and activities. originaltravel.co.uk

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DECONSTRUCT PAVLOVA

The origins of this decadent dessert have sparked debate for decades, but whether it's Australian or Kiwi, it's seen many iterations over the years

WORDS: FELICITY CLOAKE. PHOTOGRAPHS: HANNAH HUGHES
FOOD STYLIST: KATHY KORDALIS

Sweet as it tastes, this much-loved dessert has a bitter history. As is the case with both hummus and hamburgers, the pavlova's birthplace is hotly disputed, with Australia and New Zealand each claiming credit for the idea of crowning towers of billowing meringue with clouds of snowy cream and tumbling fruit.

Regular shots are fired back and forth across the Tasman Sea, most recently when a Kiwi energy company 'declared war' by installing an advert at Auckland Airport baggage reclaim stating: 'Home is where the pavlova was really created'. Reactions on the other side of 'the ditch' were outraged: 'Nice of them to promote tourism to Australia' was one online comment.

The feud goes all the way to the top, as then Kiwi prime minister Jacinda Ardern discovered when she arrived in Melbourne to find a DIY pavlova kit in her hotel room — prompting her partner to question whether this represented a "sense of humour or diplomatic incident". King Charles must have been unaware of the simmering controversy when he boldly praised Sydney's "world famous cuisine ... whether it's smashed avo, a pav or a cab sav" in a speech at the city's Parramatta Park last year.

Yet, in truth, the pavlova's precise origins are shrouded in mystery. It was almost certainly

named for the great prima ballerina Anna Pavlova, from St Petersburg — probably to celebrate her hugely successful 1926 tour of Australia and New Zealand. This wasn't uncommon practice at the time; peach melba was invented at London's Savoy Hotel to pay tribute to the Australian soprano Dame Nellie Melba, while Britain's Garibaldi biscuit honours the Italian revolutionary, who was given a rapturous welcome on a visit to these shores. Such was the vogue for sprinkling stardust over a menu that, at the height of Pavlova's career, you can find mention of sponge cakes, layered jellies and 'a popular variety of American ice-cream' all bearing her name, too.

Although the meringue number is now the last pavlova standing, at the time it was simply a rebranding of an existing dessert — a fixture in the patisserie repertoire long before Anna pirouetted onto the world stage. Food historian Janet Clarkson suggests "neither Australia nor New Zealand invented the meringue, because the meringue was invented before they were". And while many trace meringue's origins to 18th-century Switzerland, in Clarkson's blog, the Old Foodie, she dates the first recorded recipe to the 1604 collection of a Lady Elinor Fettiplace.

Annabelle Utrecht, a Queensland-based writer, has devoted the past decade to digging into the history of the pavlova, prompted by an online argument with a Kiwi acquaintance. In the course of their research, the pair discovered that by the 18th century, "large meringue constructions incorporating cream and fruit elements could be found in aristocratic kitchens across German-speaking lands, so the thing we call a pavlova today is actually more than two centuries old".

Naturally, everyone wanted a slice of this noble pie, and recipes began to appear: the vacherin, a meringue bowl filled with whipped cream or ice cream, fruit and syrup-infused sponge cake, often credited to the 19th-century French chef Marie-Antoine Carême; the baked alaska; the German schaum ('foam') torte. Even English writer Mrs Beeton includes a meringue gâteau, filled with macerated strawberries and whipped cream, in her 1861 recipe collection. It therefore seems likely that the pavlova probably arrived in both New Zealand and Australia with European immigrants long before Pavlova herself.

Of course, few dishes spring fully formed from nowhere, but when did the idea of a meringue topped with cream and fruit begin



to be known as a ‘pavlova’ — or a ‘pav’, if you speak Antipodean? The earliest mention of something resembling the modern pavlova labelled as such can be found in the 1929 *New Zealand Dairy Exporter Annual*, contributed by a reader, although this version seems to have been layered more like a French dacquoise.

The next-earliest, from the *Rangiora Mothers’ Union Cookery Book of Tried and Tested Recipes*, of 1933, is also Kiwi. Australia’s first claim to the dish dates from 1935, when Herbert ‘Bert’ Sachse, the chef at Perth’s Esplanade Hotel, was asked to come up with something new for the afternoon tea menu. Manager Harry Nairn apparently remarked that his creation was “as light as Pavlova”, and the legend was born.

However, one of Sachse’s descendants contacted Helen Leach, a culinary anthropologist at the University of Otago, to suggest their ancestor may have confused the dates, given Pavlova’s death in 1931. And in a 1973 interview, Sachse himself explained his creation was an adaptation of a recipe from *Australian Woman’s Mirror* magazine, submitted by a New Zealand resident.

When questioned by Australian newspaper *The Beverley Times*, the ‘silver-haired great grandfather’ mused that he’d “always regretted that the meringue cake was invariably too hard and crusty, so I set out to create something that would have a crunchy top and would cut like a marshmallow”. This, according to Utrecht’s Kiwi research partner Dr Andrew Paul Wood, makes Western Australia-born Sachse unusual among his countrymen: “I think the Australian meringue is crunchier ... the New Zealand one is more marshmallowy inside,” Wood told *The Sydney Morning Herald’s Good Food* guide.

In her 2024 book *Sift*, British pastry chef and cookery book author Nicola Lamb writes that adding cornflour to the meringue base, as both Sachse and the *New Zealand Dairy Exporter Annual* reader suggest, “helps promote [this] marshmallowy, thick texture”. For maximum squishiness, however, Lamb recommends



For maximum squishiness, pastry chef and cookery book author Nicola Lamb recommends shaping the mixture into a tall crown; if you prefer crunchy all the way through, go for a shallow bowl shape

shaping the mixture into a tall crown, ‘as it’s more difficult for the heat to penetrate the thick meringue walls’; if you prefer crunchy all the way through, go for a shallow bowl shape.

Whatever texture you choose, once the meringue has cooled completely it’s generally filled with whipped cream — usually unsweetened, given the sugar in the meringue, although it may be flavoured with vanilla — and then your choice of fruit. Australian cultural historian Dr Carmel Cedro agrees with Wood that not only do the two countries disagree over the correct texture for a pavlova, but on appropriate toppings. “Here, passion fruit is a must,” she told Australia’s ABC News, “whereas [in New Zealand], they would never do that; it’s always kiwi fruit.”

In recent years, however, this classic summer dessert — or, if you’re Down Under, festive favourite — has gone as rogue as its history. Australian food stylist and author Donna Hay has published countless recipes for everything from a banoffee pavlova to a baked pavlova and upside-down and frozen versions, and even a festive raspberry swirl pavlova wreath.

South African restaurateur, broadcaster and writer Prue Leith, meanwhile, has a vegan-friendly take using aquafaba and coconut milk, while English food writer and TV cook Nigella Lawson gifted the world the chocolate pavlova paired with raspberries. And although pavlova isn’t typically seen as a gourmet creation, Australian chef Peter Gilmore’s signature dessert at Bennelong, the Sydney Opera House’s fine-dining restaurant, takes it high end. Inspired by the architecture of the building itself, it features white meringue sails atop perfect spikes of whipped cream and Italian meringue filled with passion fruit curd.

When it comes to pavlova, it seems, there’s one for every taste. Although the caviar and cranberry number recently dreamed up by a firm of Polish fish farmers might prove the one pav neither Australia nor New Zealand wants to claim as their own.

TIMELINE

	1870s Thanks to widespread Germanic emigration, meringue-based schaum tortes make it as far as the American Midwest	1929 The first recipe for a large, meringue-based ‘pavlova cake’ is published in the <i>New Zealand Dairy Exporter Annual</i>	1953 The young Queen Elizabeth II is served pavlova by Queen Salote of Tonga
18th century Meringue-based desserts become fashionable among the aristocracy of Central Europe	1926 Anna Pavlova tours Australia and New Zealand so successfully that she returns to Australia three years later	1935 Herbert ‘Bert’ Sachse puts pavlova on the menu at Perth’s Esplanade Hotel	2009 New Zealand Prime Minister John Key describes the Australian claim to have invented the pavlova as “totally ridiculous”

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Chef & Sommelier

Helen Goh's summer berry pavlova

To celebrate summer, I've chosen a mix of berries with a touch of passion fruit as a nod to the dessert's Antipodean roots — but feel free to use any in-season fruit.

SERVES: 8-10

TAKES: 2 HRS 5 MINS

PLUS COOLING

INGREDIENTS FOR THE MERINGUE

250g egg whites (6-8 eggs, depending on size)
½ tsp cream of tartar
400g caster sugar
2 tsp vanilla extract
1 tsp white vinegar
2 tsp cornflour
pinch of salt

FOR THE CREAM

400ml double cream
150g mascarpone

50g icing sugar
1 tsp vanilla extract

FOR THE BERRY FILLING

500g mixed berries (strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries), washed, patted dry
2-3 passion fruit (optional)

METHOD

1 Use a plate or cake tin around 24cm in diameter to trace a circle on a sheet of baking paper. Place the sheet ink-side down on a large baking tray and set aside. Preheat the oven to 150C, fan 130C and position the oven rack in the bottom third of the oven.

2 For the meringue, place the egg whites in an electric mixer bowl with the whisk attachment, and beat on medium-high speed until frothy, about 1 min. Add the cream of tartar and continue to whisk until soft peaks form

(3-4 mins), then gradually add the sugar, 1 tbsp at a time. Whisk constantly until the mix turns thick and glossy, 8-10 mins. Reduce the speed to low and add the vanilla, vinegar, cornflour and salt, then increase to medium-high speed and whisk for 1 min until combined.

3 Dab a little meringue under the four corners of the baking paper so that it sticks to the tray, then spoon the rest onto the centre of the traced circle. Use a flexible spatula to spread it into an even circle then form a shallow crater in the middle by gently circling it with the back of a spoon. Place the tray onto the bottom rack of the oven and immediately lower the temperature to 120C, fan 100C. Bake for 1 hr 45 mins without opening the door, then switch the oven off, leaving the

meringue to cool completely in the oven for 2 hrs or overnight.

4 Just before serving, place all the ingredients for the cream in an electric mixer bowl with the whisk attachment and beat on medium until soft peaks form.

5 Using the flat metal base of a tart tin or similar, loosen the base of the meringue from the baking paper and carefully transfer to a serving plate. Spoon the whipped cream mixture into the centre of the pavlova and spread to the edges. Gently place some of the larger berries on top of the cream, then tuck the smaller berries in and around them. Spoon the pulp of the passion fruit on top (if using), allowing it to dribble down the pavlova. Serve immediately.

Baking and the Meaning of Life, by Helen Goh, is published on 11 September (£26, Murdoch Books).





WHERE TO EAT

Here are some of the best places to enjoy world-class pavlova in the UK and Southern Hemisphere

QUO VADIS, LONDON

Although not listed on the menu as a pavlova, chef Jeremy Lee's creation is very much the same thing: joyful tumbles of meringue, seasonal fruit and double cream piled up with glorious abandon and topped with chopped nuts, curds, compotes and custard. At this Soho institution (pictured above), the fruit changes from forced rhubarb in January to summer berries, figs and grapes, then caramelised pear and almonds in autumn. quovadissoho.co.uk

GAYA BAKERY, LONDON

If you're looking for a real showstopper for a party or special event, then Gaya Vara's Putney bakery has you covered — the self-taught patissier describes herself as a cake artist, and one look at her raspberry pavlova confirms

this is no mere bombast. Sculptural spikes of meringue — crisp on the outside, marshmallowy within — enclose peaks of vanilla mascarpone cream, topped with sharp raspberry curd and spirals of fresh raspberries. It's almost too pretty to eat. gayabakery.com

JOE'S ICE CREAM, SWANSEA, CARDIFF & LLANELLI

You won't find a classic pavlova at this Welsh institution, which has been serving up legendary gelato since 1922, but the frozen cakes, made with layers of vanilla ice cream, smooth, ruby-red raspberry jam and crunchy little meringue kisses are a fun take on the pavlova's blend of fruity, creamy flavours and smooth and crunchy textures. Order online in advance to avoid disappointment. joesicecream.com

PAVLOVA BAKERY, GLASGOW

This West End family bakery specialises in the French-influenced classic Russian patisserie of the owner's childhood, from layered honey and almond walnut cakes to crunchy, custardy Napoleon mille feuille. But it also offers beautifully piped pavlovas, topped with whipped cream and plenty of tart, juicy Scottish berries. pavlovabakery.co.uk

CIBO, AUCKLAND

Hidden away in a former chocolate factory in Parnell, Cibo has been described as one of Auckland's best-kept secrets, although it's still won numerous awards over the past three decades. There are usually at least two pavlovas on offer: a fruit version (classic strawberry and kiwi, for example) and one with salted caramel, peanut and chocolate dust. cibo.co.nz

FLORIDITAS, WELLINGTON

When *The Sydney Morning Herald* praises a New Zealand pavlova, the dessert has to be doing something right — although this much-loved bistro doesn't make things easy for itself. Instead of the classic recipe using white caster sugar, Floriditas opts for brown sugar, which is damper and more temperamental, but which gives the meringue base a deeper, richer flavour. Fruit varies with the seasons, from strawberries in summer to tamarillos in autumn. floriditas.co.nz

ESTER, SYDNEY

Forget hovering anxiously in front of the oven to ensure your snowy meringue doesn't take on even the merest hint of tan — at this Sydney neighbourhood joint (which comes highly recommended by Nigella

Lawson) they char them in a wood-fired oven at a toasty 600C. That's a full 500C hotter than most recipes recommend, giving them the distinct look of a marshmallow toasted over a campfire. The accompaniments vary; they might be nectarine and yoghurt or passion fruit and elderflower, for example. ester-restaurant.com.au

SNOW WHITE BAKERY, MELBOURNE

Overwhelming local enthusiasm for this tiny bakery's classic pavlova — an unapologetically traditional tower of meringue, cream and icing-sugar-dusted berries — may be less of a news story than baker Tegan's Vegemite-infused take on the beloved Australian lamington (a cake), but it's probably more of a crowd-pleaser. snowwhitebakery.com.au



Be responsible. Drink with moderation.

PHOTO: QUINTA DA ALMIARA

LISBOA WINES

TASTE THE ATLANTIC

Nestled near Portugal's vibrant capital, the Lisboa Wine Region beckons wine-enthusiasts and adventure-seekers alike. This captivating destination seamlessly blends rich history, exquisite wines and thrilling experiences, creating an unforgettable journey for visitors.

Spanning 10,000 hectares of vineyards, its centuries-old winemaking heritage flourishes in diverse microclimates shaped by the Atlantic.

A visit to the Lisboa Wine Region offers an immersive experience that indulges all senses. From sipping award-winning wines amidst stunning landscapes to exploring historical sites and riding world-class waves, Lisboa invites you to create lasting memories. Come and uncover the magic of this diverse and captivating region, where every moment is an opportunity for discovery and delight.



PHOTO: CYRIL SEGA



SCAN FOR WINE TOURISM MAP





IN ONTARIO'S VINEYARD COUNTRY, ORCHARDS, MICRO-FARMS AND
ROADSIDE STALLS OFFER A LOCAL BOUNTY THAT TALENTED HOME COOKS
TRANSFORM INTO FEASTS SERVED WITH PLENTY OF NEW-WAVE ICEWINE



& fine wine

WORDS: ZOEEY GOTO. PHOTOGRAPHS: LIAM MOGAN

“I’m not really a farmer,” Renee Delaney tells me sheepishly, despite our surroundings clearly suggesting otherwise.

Nearby, a chorus of grunting piglets wallow in a mud bath, overlooked by a pen of miniature goats. “All this started life 10 years ago with just one tomato plant, which I brought to put food on the table as a single mother,” says Renee. She gestures, with an arm covered in botanical tattoos, at her 19-acre plot at Small Scale Farms. An abundant tapestry of potato fields and vines bowing under the weight of juicy ripe tomatoes unfurls towards a distant red barn, which is home to the farm shop, painting a glorious picture of rural idyll.

Canada’s Niagara Region, in the province of Ontario, encompasses a verdant patch of vineyards and orchards. Set between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, it’s about an hour’s drive south west of Toronto. The thundering waterfalls of Niagara Falls, long considered one of North America’s most spectacular natural sites, are undoubtedly the star attraction; however, since the 1980s, Ontario has also pinned itself to the map as an emerging wine-producing region. Paired with this booming viniculture, a

grassroots culinary scene has sprung forth, offering plucky first-time growers like Renee opportunities to reap a living from the land.

From its backyard roots, Small Scale Farms has blossomed into a green refuge for the community, tucked away by the road six miles from the misty cascades of Niagara Falls.

Renee also runs a farm school, teaching agricultural techniques to a predominantly female cohort of first-generation growers. As a result, Renee tells me, she feels more like a teacher than a hands-in-the-soil farmer. This is despite the fact she’s tending to her ramshackle chicken coop while wearing a T-shirt that proudly declares in bold white lettering: ‘I am a farmer’. “I’m super focused on teaching others about food security,” she enthuses, her burnt-orange hair braided into a neat plait. “And luckily, Niagara has one of the best growing climates in Canada, because we’re southern and sheltered.”

Inside the rustic farm shop, I find Richard Willett. Wearing a dapper trilby hat, the 57-year-old former hospitality executive is

Clockwise from right: Renee Delaney and her chickens at Small Scale Farms; locally picked berries and rhubarb being prepped for dessert; brothers Daniel, Matt and Paul Speck tour their vineyard, Henry of Pelham. Previous pages from left: Asparagus grown at Small Scale Farms; a glass of chardonnay at Ferox





sourcing ingredients for a feast with friends this evening. Like many others during the pandemic, Richard traded the bright lights of the city for a more relaxed pace of life, relocating from Toronto to the quaint harbour town of Port Dalhousie in 2021. A passionate foodie, he's utilised his love of home cooking to connect with neighbours in the Niagara Peninsula, including local smallholders and vintners.

In preparation for tonight's meal, Richard is busy filling his basket with curly garlic scapes and soil-encrusted Jerusalem artichokes (known here as 'sunchokes'). He inspects a slab of butter made from the milk of a water buffalo. "I've not seen this around here before; let's give it a try," he shrugs, adding it to the basket, explaining that he's an instinctive, self-taught cook who likes to experiment in the kitchen. Richard is clearly keen to get cooking, but before he can throw his apron on, he wants to show me around his neighbourhood a bit, including a pit stop at a pioneering boutique vineyard.

Cruising deep into the heart of Niagara's wine country, the winding road carves through rolling hills of grapevines ripening in the midday sun. Punctuating this fertile landscape, upscale tasting rooms, some with adjoining farm-to-table restaurants and al fresco sculpture parks, create an enticing route for budding oenophiles to follow. Ontario's first winery opened in 1866 and today the province is home to more than 150 vineyards, many of which focus on sustainability.

Nowhere is that more apparent than at Ferox; a young vineyard just minutes from the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, where horse-drawn carriages take tourists past trinket shops and country inns. We pull up outside Ferox's outhouses to be greeted by owner Fabian Reis and winemaker Cubby Sadoon — two hip thirtysomethings on a mission to create low-impact wine.

"Welcome to the Napa Valley of Canada," Fabian says, with a grin, leading us into their sun-dappled courtyard, where grapes ferment in enormous silver vats just a few feet away. A table soon overflows with delicate dishes of elevated farm fare, including exquisite spears of earthy asparagus finished with a confetti-like scattering of edible flowers. It's been prepared by Sicilian-born chef Adriano Cappuzzello, who heads up the vineyard's new restaurant, The Patio.

Leaning back in his chair and swirling a glass of ruby-red cabernet franc, Fabien explains that the pared-back ethos extends way beyond the aesthetics of his vineyard, which produces 9,000 cases of wine annually. "We try to follow a minimalistic, low-intervention approach in everything we do," he says. "So, that involves avoiding pesticides. We use regenerative farming methods and lock in nutrients using cow manure





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Left: Morel, lion's mane and pink oyster mushrooms from Craig Adams' Fresh Niagara Mushrooms, sautéed in Small Scale Farms' water buffalo butter

and mushroom compost. We've also been trialling the lightest-weight bottles possible to help reduce our carbon footprint."

Cubby, who learnt his trade in the hallowed cellars of Europe, adds that while the very concept of Canadian wine once raised eyebrows, climate change is having an impact on this. "Places around the world once considered preeminent wine-growing regions are now really struggling. But in Ontario, we have the benefit of a varied climate," Cubby says, noting that their wine-growing season also extends well into the winter months, thanks to Canadian icewine, which will be served with tonight's meal.

It's mid-afternoon and Richard's guests are due to arrive soon, so we head for Port Dalhousie. Beyond the car window, tractors idle along country roads and figures crouch down in pick-your-own strawberry fields. Roadside stalls offer jars of preserved peach slices and lattice-topped pies baked by the local Mennonite community, who still use horses and buggies to bring their goods to market. Rural Niagara might only be an hour or so from the urban buzz of Toronto, but it feels a world away.

Walking through the door of Richard's saltbox-style wooden home, which is as pretty as a doll's house, the smell of roast porchetta embraces us. A hulking joint of Ontario-reared hog's belly and loin has been cooking low and slow throughout the afternoon, sharing the pan with clusters of Jerusalem artichokes basking in the meaty jus. Richard retrieves it all from the oven.

A smorgasbord of hyper-local ingredients is laid out on the kitchen counter, including black

walnuts from a nearby nut orchard. There are also lion's mane mushrooms — each the size of a large grapefruit — and delicately frilled oyster mushrooms. Richard sourced these earlier from a friend who grows fungi at his home and sells them to some of Canada's most prominent chefs from the boot of his car.

As Richard sautés the mushrooms in a dollop of water buffalo butter, for the starter, he recalls that his taste for fine dining developed at a surprisingly tender age. While his parents weren't keen cooks themselves, they did enjoy dining out as a family, which they'd often do five nights a week. "I was eating frogs' legs at the age of six," he recounts with a smile.

A rap on the door signals the arrival of Daniel Speck, a sixth-generation vintner whose ancestors planted some of the first grapevines in Canada. He's dropping off a bottle of riesling icewine from his Henry of Pelham vineyard to be used in tonight's zabaglione, an Italian custard dessert. Steam is rising from a simmering pot of water, over which Richard vigorously whips farm-fresh egg yolks and a flurry of sugar. He finishes the custard with a generous splash of icewine as Daniel explains why cool-climate wine is considered such a prized tippie.

While Ontario's Mediterranean summers and Siberian winters provide ideal conditions for crafting icewine, it can still be a perilous process, he says. Grapes are left to freeze on the vine into December, which concentrates the sugar, but also leaves the crop vulnerable to the elements. "Icewine is a risky business and expensive to make. We're battling wild turkeys and deer eating the fruit, then crushing a

Garlic scape pesto

Richard Willet's pesto, made with garlic stalks, is the perfect punchy accompaniment to generous cuts of steak, pork and lamb.

SERVES: 8 TAKES: 30 MINS

INGREDIENTS

a handful of washed, roughly cut garlic stalks (these stalks can be substituted with 3 large garlic cloves)
15g basil, freshly picked
33g black walnuts (can be substituted with hazelnuts or pine nuts)
140g grated Guernsey heritage cheddar cheese (or parmesan)
zest of half a lemon and a squeeze of lemon juice to taste
14 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp wine vinegar
½ tsp honey
sea salt and freshly ground pepper

METHOD

- 1 Start with the garlic stalks (stem and flower head of a garlic bulb, in season in the UK, March-April). Fast boil the scapes for 90 secs and then plunge them into cold water.
- 2 Remove the scapes from the water and pulse in a blender or food processor with the basil, black walnuts (which can be lightly toasted in the oven to bring out the flavour), grated cheese and lemon zest.
- 3 Next, drizzle in the olive oil, wine vinegar, lemon juice and honey. Puree all the ingredients until smooth. If the pesto is too thick in consistency, add a few tbsp of water. Taste and season with salt and pepper. Can be served immediately or covered and refrigerated for a few hours before adding as a cold accompaniment to meat.



An appetiser of sourdough with homemade pickled onions and pâté
Above: Host Richard Willett preps strawberries

mountain of grapes for a small amount of juice. But it's worth it to produce one of the world's great sweet wines," he says, as Richard leaves the icewine-infused custard to cool.

An eclectic cast of friends arrives, including a bohemian neighbour, a former skateboard shop franchise owner who now likes to drive around town dressed as Santa during the festive period. Glasses of merlot from Ferox vineyard — a fruity number with lively bursts of pepper and chocolate — are poured and we take our seats in the garden with some sourdough, homemade chicken liver pâté and pickled onions.

Dusk arrives with the rich and earthy mushroom course, accompanied by twinkling fireflies. After that, the tantalising aroma of garlic rises from our plates, as Richard drizzles a vibrant green pesto, whizzed up in his food processor using scapes — the stalks of garlic plants from Renee's farm — over slices of porchetta, its skin crisp with salted crackling.

"Sunchokes were important to the First Nations people in Canada, and among some of the first foods picked by Europeans and brought back to Europe," Richard explains as he serves a hefty bowl of the roasted root vegetables.

Talk soon turns to what's growing in Niagara's plentiful farmlands — cherries and blueberries currently overflow from roadside stalls, I'm told, while the promise of apples, peaches and pumpkins is on the horizon. "To mark the end of the season, the grand finale is a zabaglione dessert, served with Niagara's summer fruits," Richard says, sliding plates of a berries smothered in a boozy blanket of frothed custard before us. It's the perfect pairing; the honeyed syrup of icewine, which tastes like biting into a freshly baked peach, is balanced by the tartness of the raspberries and blueberries. "I'm leaving you with a sweet taste of Niagara," Richard concludes, as we scrape our plates clean. Glasses are raised aloft to toast our chef, the indie farmers and the spirited winemakers of rural Ontario. ▢

HOW TO DO IT: Air Transat flies direct from Gatwick, Manchester and Glasgow to Toronto. [airtransat.com](https://www.airtransat.com)
124 on Queen Hotel and Spa in Niagara-on-the-Lake has doubles from C\$330 (£185) a night, room only. [124queen.com](https://www.124queen.com) [destinationontario.com](https://www.destinationontario.com)

FLAVOURS OF ONTARIO

Icewine

Canada is the world's largest producer of this 'liquid gold', a labour-intensive wine first discovered in Europe in the late 1700s, following an unexpected frost. "Icewine may have started as a German product, but Niagara has really refined it," says Richard.

Butter tarts

Ontario puts its own spin on this national dish, and nowhere more so than the stylish 13th Street Winery in Niagara, which sells 2,500 tarts daily at the weekend including a maple bacon, raspberry coconut and Skor (a toffee chocolate bar) variety.

Maple syrup

Maple syrup is taken seriously in Ontario. At the White Meadows Farm in Niagara, visitors can join tours during the warmer months to learn how four generations of makers have tapped the estate's trees, before tasting the homegrown syrups.

Summer sausage

A favourite with southwestern Ontario's Mennonite communities, this smoked and cured salami-like sausage of beef, pork or venison pairs well with a glass of wine at a local vineyard. Or try them at St Jacobs Farmers' Market, where stalls also sell breads and cheeses.



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GEORGIA

How to eat your way around Tbilisi

From storied bazaars to contemporary dining to detours to the nearby wine region, here's how to savour the Georgian capital in a weekend. Words: Emily Lush

Food and wine are at the heart of Georgian culture, with the ritual communal feast known as 'supra' and an 8,000-year-old history of winemaking both deeply embedded in national identity. The Georgian kitchen is shaped by centuries of trade and tradition — and in Tbilisi, where art nouveau facades and Soviet-era edifices meet Mediterranean-inspired courtyards and Persian-style bathhouses, those influences can be tasted in generously proportioned dishes, as well as vintage wines produced using Georgia's signature clay qveri vessels. Laid-back taverns and upscale addresses all have one thing in common: eating is an unhurried, social affair, with dishes always served to share. From pillowy dumplings to punchy grape liquor, here's what not to miss in the Georgian capital.

DAY ONE

Tbilisi is late to rise, but the breakfast scene has taken off in recent years. Local favourite Kikliko dishes up comforting eggy bread topped with ham and briny sulguni cheese. Before leaving the trendy Vera district, call into Cheese House to sample more of Georgia's 60 speciality cheeses, including Tushetian guda, ripened in a sheepskin bag.

Cross the Mtkvari River to the Dezerter Bazaar, where you can explore solo or book a tour with Meet Me Here Tbilisi for a deep dive into the city's vibrant produce market. As you explore the various sections, chat with vendors who trade in mountain honey and Svanetian salt — a blend containing coriander seeds, blue fenugreek and dried marigold. The tour ends at Zeche, a reincarnated Soviet-era workers' canteen, where the menu includes bao buns stuffed with lobio, spiced beans.

Post-lunch, stroll along Aghmashenebeli Avenue, eyes skyward to admire the art nouveau architecture, making a stop at Fabrika, a sewing factory-turned-creative hub where coffee is served in a graffitied courtyard. An appointment at 8000 Vintages awaits, to sample a degustation of Georgian and European-style wines under the guidance of a sommelier. After, board the cable car to Mtatsminda Park for panoramic sunset views.

For a late dinner, request a table inside the shushabandi (glazed balcony) at Keto and Kote — a fine-dining restaurant set in a mansion that epitomises old Tbilisi charm. The pkhali (a garlic, walnut and vegetable dip) and the shila plavi — a pilaf of lamb and mushrooms — are highlights. Afterwards, you can drop by Chacha Time for a nightcap and try Georgia's 40–85% proof grape pomace liquor infused with walnut, tarragon or honey.



IMAGES: GEORGIA NATIONAL TOURISM ADMINISTRATION; GETTY

DAY TWO

Jumpstart the day with a stroll along Rustaveli Avenue, pausing to admire the 1896 Moorish-style Opera and Ballet Theatre. A few blocks back from the avenue, Reserve features fresh eggs, homemade sausages and other locally sourced ingredients in its farmhouse breakfast. Save room for a saperavi croissant, tinged pink with grapeseed flour from the most ubiquitous of Georgia's 500-plus indigenous grapes.

Spend the rest of the morning in the maze of winding lanes, wooden balconies and courtyards that is the Kala — or Castle — district. This is a great opportunity to stock up on pantry souvenirs, with shops Khurjini and Georgian Kalata offering pinecone jam and tkemali plum sauce. Nearby store Badagi is known for its churchkhela — nuts dipped in a grape juice roux.

Notice the shift to neatly gridded streets as you slip out of the former walled city and enter Sololaki, Tbilisi's oldest residential neighbourhood. Set among the bars and cafes of handsome Tabidze Street, Bitadze Tea Museum explains how Georgia used to be amongst the world's largest tea producers. Do a tasting with the owner and pick up some loose leaves to steep at home.

Continue to Bazari Orbeliani, a gourmet food court inside a historic 1886 market hall, and order a scoop of artisanal ice cream from The Cone Culture — the spicy vanilla ajika is a favourite. If there's room for lunch, enjoy a plate of traditional mountain-style khinkali dumplings stuffed with beef at Pictograma.

At 4pm, meet your guide and set off on the one-hour drive east to the Alazani Valley, Georgia's main wine region. Eat This! Tours hosts intimate experiences in partnership with family-run wineries. The evening starts with a casual tasting and cellar tour, followed by a hands-on lesson in khinkali pleating. With your host acting as tamada, meaning toastmaster, expect poetic speeches and tableside singing as you join the family for a supra of Kakhetian mtsvadi (barbecued meat skewers) and khachapuri cheese bread.



Clockwise from left: Narikala Fortress and view over Tbilisi, Georgia; a plate of pkhali; a chef preparing khinkali dumplings

PLAN YOUR TRIP

Nonstop flights to Tbilisi from Heathrow and Luton launched this spring. Use the bus and metro system to move around the districts. For more information, visit georgia.travel





CITY BREAK

LISBON

A great-value dining destination, the Portuguese capital has a host of new restaurants and, as of last year, its own Michelin Guide

WORDS: AMELIA DUGGAN

The story of Lisbon's culinary evolution over the past decade is one of homecomings. Portuguese chefs, having sought their fortunes in the great kitchens of Europe, were drawn home by saudade, that uniquely Portuguese concept of longing. And together with other homegrown and overseas talent, they've fuelled a gastronomic sea change in Lisbon, insisting on a lightness and daring that defies the conservative culinary leanings of the past century.

Today, Lisbon's restaurant scene is as cosmopolitan as you'll find anywhere in Europe. With brasserie Santa Joana, molecular master Nuno Mendes has returned to his home city to offer a modern twist on Portuguese flavours — rich morsels such as grilled chicken hearts with pica pau sauce; and ocean-fresh dishes, from tuna belly to juicy red shrimps. And at *Ofício*, Hugo Candeias presents a modern take on a working-class *tasca*, the traditional rustic tavern at the heart of Portuguese gastronomy.

These restaurants, among numerous recent openings, decorate the compact, walkable historic centre and orbiting neighbourhoods, and are united by their pride in Portuguese ingredients. And in comparison to restaurants in many other European cities, they're great value — even at the higher end. This hasn't gone unnoticed by Michelin, which finally granted Portugal its own Guide in 2024, after years of sharing with Spain.

Several spots stand out among the Michelin cohort. Among them, Arkhe sees chef João Ricardo Alves draw on a formidable network of local suppliers, while plant-based gastronomy steps into the spotlight at *Encanto*, where José Avillez now holds Lisbon's first Green Star for sustainably sourced dishes such as black truffle rice with lemon-marinated purslane. Elsewhere, Lisbon's elite chefs take to the stage in theatrical show kitchens, including *Marlene*, where reinterpreted Portuguese classics, like truffle-stuffed partridge, offer a masterclass in culinary storytelling, making chef Marlene Vieira the first Portuguese woman in over 30 years to be recognised by Michelin.

Yet, even as it reaches for the stars, Lisbon's food scene retains its humility, grounded in a strong national identification with the fisherfolk of its rugged Atlantic coastline and the farmers of its rolling hinterland. You're never far from a *tasca*, such as *A Provinciana*, serving grilled sardines and meaty *pratos do dia* (dishes of the day), and *As Bifanas do Afonso*, specialising in hearty pork sandwiches. Ideally, these meals are followed by espresso laced with a shot of *ginjinha* (cherry liqueur) from the bars north of Rossio Square. With wallet-friendly odes to Portugal's seafood and sun-sweetened wines woven into Lisbon's fabric, it's easy to see what drew Lisbon's chefs home.



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A DAY IN

ALFAMA, GRAÇA & MOURARIA

These medieval districts are the Lisbon of postcards. Vintage trams rattle past churches, washing hangs from Juliet balconies and every bend reveals a simple taverna. Start the day with something sweet at **Casa São Miguel**, a tea shop serving Portuguese treats from across the provinces. *Pasteis de nata*, Lisbon's legendary custard tarts, are freshly made on site, but there are also rarer treats: carob balls from the Algarve and orange pie from Alentejo. Get your caffeine fix here, or wander uphill to **Miradouro da Senhora do Monte**, where a specialist coffee cart awaits most days.

If it's a Saturday or Tuesday, **Feira da Ladra** flea market sets up beside **São Vicente de Fora**. Both this monastery and the nearby **National Pantheon** offer spectacular rooftop vistas but the area's crowning glory is the 11th-century Moorish citadel, **São Jorge Castle**.

The working-class roots of Mouraria, the Moorish Quarter, inform the area's cutting-edge tascas. Thanks to their well-priced small plates (modern takes on staples like pork belly and octopus), **O Velho Eurico** and **Tasca Baldracca** have a cult following. There's only one place for dessert: **Gelato Therapy**. With branches opposite Miradouro do Graça and Lisbon Cathedral, it serves ice cream with kooky flavour combinations like stracciatella and sage.

Spend the afternoon browsing upmarket shops such as **Chi Coração**, which showcases Portugal's textile heritage, or enjoy hilltop views from scenic Tram 28E. Then dinner awaits in Mouraria at **Ciclo**, with innovative sharing dishes like tempura onions and grapefruit seasoned with *tosazu* (a Japanese condiment); or in Alfama, where Lisbon's mournful fado folk music can be enjoyed over a hearty glazed ribs or baked cod at **Mesa de Frades**, set in a former chapel decorated with azulejo tiles.

Clockwise from top left: Castelo de São Jorge; mushrooms with chicken caramel at Ofício; Companhia Portuguesa do Chá; grilled sardines and sambal, Ciclo
Previous pages: Pasteis de nata (custard tarts) at Confeitaria Nacional; the Bica Funicular in Misericórdia



FINE DINING

2Monkeys

The team at 2Monkeys cook nightly for just 14 guests, constructing each dish in front of diners. Guilherme Spalk is scintillating in action, but the true drama lies on the plate. The audacious 12-course tasting menu, co-curated by Portugal's most decorated chef, Vítor Matos, is rich with caviar and fine meats. 2monkeys.com.pt

Arkhe

This vegetarian venue with just 18 covers was awarded a Michelin star this year. Chef João Ricardo Alves and co-owner/sommelier Alejandro Chávarro offer a seven-course tasting menu notable for its delicate sauces and French and Brazilian references. Try shiitake terrine with cashew cream and glazed asparagus. arkhe.pt

Ciclo

Oysters with kiwano, and cockles and wild boar 'nduja are among the fresh flavours at this 2024 opening in the Moorish Quarter. Chef José Neves and host Claudia Silva are behind Ciclo's zero-waste alchemy, transmuting peels, skins and tops into pickles and powders, on display in pots. ciclo-restaurant.pt

A DAY IN

SANTOS, SÃO BENTO
& PRÍNCIPE REAL

Just west of the historic centre, this arc of desirable neighbourhoods cradles some of Lisbon's most fashionable shops and restaurants. Breakfast on wasabi eggs benedict on the leafy patio of **Marquise**. And if it's a Saturday, head over to the organic farmers' market at **Parque Príncipe Real**, which sells local honey, cakes and orange juice. Across the street, don't miss **EmbaiXada**, a 20th-century neo-Arab palace turned indie emporium showcasing the work of national and local designers.

The light interiors and pretty setting on the edge of Praça das Flores are the cherry on top of a playful sharing menu at **Magnolia Bistrot & Winebar**, whose highlights include a pork-filled brioche with comté and pineapple chutney. Alternatively, **By Milocas**, set within the Centro Cultural de Cabo Verde, celebrates the island cuisine of Cape Verde — a former Portuguese colony — with dishes like cachupa (a stew of pork, corn, beans and cassava), followed by syrupy crème caramel-like milk pudim.

Browse the antiques shops on Rua São Bento, pausing for gelato at **Nannarella**, or head south to the independent clothing and concept shops on Rua do Poço dos Negros; get loose-leaf tea and insights into Portugal's role in bringing infusions to Europe at **Companhia Portuguesa do Chá**.

An introduction to fado music awaits at **Foundation Amália Rodrigues**, the house-museum of Portugal's greatest folk singer, with concerts in the garden on certain days. Time for a pick-me-up? Duck through the velvet curtains at tiny, speakeasy-style **The Midnight Espresso**, a cafe offering cocktails and spectacular desserts. Don't miss the rooibos pecan pie.

Book ahead for a table at **Tricky's**, where the vibe is fun but the food — such as kohlrabi pickle taco with 'nduja and tuna marinated in citrus kombucha — is to be taken seriously. And then end the night at **Holy Wine**, a tiny bar serving organic and biodynamic wines, where patrons spill out onto the street in the evenings.

CONTEMPORARY
TASCAS**Ofício**

Decadently playful sharing dishes are served with aplomb at this funky, informal address in the chic Chiado district. Awarded a Michelin Bib Gourmand just a year after its 2021 opening, chef Hugo Candeias's self-described 'atypical tasca' is a local sensation. Expect foamy seaweed spaghetti enriched with quail yolks, tender scallops swimming in dashi and the creamiest Basque cheesecake. [instagram.com/oficiolisboa](https://www.instagram.com/oficiolisboa)

Canalha

At this refined neighbourhood bistro-style restaurant, upriver in the Belém district chef João Rodrigues crafts a seasonal, ingredient-led menu featuring the likes of open prawn omelette and squid with sheep's butter. Awarded a Michelin Bib Gourmand in 2024, this is a soulful homage to Portugal's culinary heritage. [canalha.pt](https://www.canalha.pt)

Tasca Pete

Seating just 18, this paired-back spot combines the vibe of a neighbourhood tasca with a modern small-plates restaurant and a focus on local, seasonal produce. Order a glass of natural wine and create a feast from the daily chalkboard menu of dishes such as blueberry focaccia and grilled octopus with charred corn puree and smoky chorizo. [instagram.com/tasca.pete](https://www.instagram.com/tasca.pete)





Left: Lota Sea & Fire's lively interiors match the fresh and creative dishes it serves up

SPOTLIGHT

SEAFOOD

The Portuguese are among Europe's largest consumers of fish. Sardines and bacalhau (salt cod) are staples of the nation's diet, the latter desalinated and then whipped into croquettes or bacalhau à brás, an unctuous bake with potatoes, eggs and olives.

There's an ocean of seafood to explore in Lisbon, but a great place to start is at **Último Porto**, a casual grill hidden away in a former boathouse in the western docks. The quest to get there is rewarded by rustic seafood dishes like grilled cuttlefish in ink, where the freshness of the produce speaks for itself. Innovating in the seafood sphere is **A Taberna do Mar**, a quirky joint

in Graça where a 10-course, Japanese-infused seafood tasting menu will set you back just €35 (£29). Playful decor and an evolving seasonal menu await at **Lota Sea & Fire**, in the north of Lisbon. Come for the amberjack ceviche spiced with orange and almonds, stay for the smoked eel in puff pastry and marrare sauce.

Meanwhile, across the Tagus, reached by passenger ferry, **Ponto Final** is a waterfront taberna that serves up picturesque views of Lisbon along with memorable piri-iri prawns and a rich monkfish stew. Its popularity means it's advisable to book months in advance or arrive an hour before opening. 🍷

WINE BARS

Black Sheep Lisboa

Surprises await at this menu-free temple to biodynamic and organic wines, located on one of Lisbon's most scenic squares, Praça das Flores. A masterclass in Portuguese low-intervention wines would be attractive enough but, for a small deposit, guests can take glasses into the square to enjoy among the trees. blacksheep LISBOA.COM

Lisbon by the Glass

Telling the story of Portugal's terroir through reasonably priced wine flights from the mainland, Azores and Madeira, this cosy bar is set on a vertiginous lane in the city centre that climbs from Rossio to Bairro Alto. Discover lesser-known wine regions and local cheeses, and don't miss the flaming chorizo. instagram.com/lisbonbytheglass

Insaciável

With outdoor seating along the pavement and low-lit tables inside, this chic haunt in the buzzy Santos district is beloved by locals for its passionate staff who ply guests with tastings to identify their preferred wine profile. Among the elevated small plates are fresh oysters and pork terrine, all locally sourced. instagram.com/insaciavel.lisboa

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE

There are direct flights to Lisbon from London, Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Bristol with airlines including British Airways, EasyJet, Ryanair and TAP Air Portugal.

WHERE TO STAY

Locke de Santa Joana is a self-catering urban resort, home to Nuno Mendes' Santa Joana restaurant Doubles from €200 (£167) room only. lockeliving.com

HOW TO DO IT

Intrepid Travel offers the eight-day Portugal Real Food Adventure, from £2,650 per person, including a farm stay, cookery class, tastings and visits to producers, plus two days in Lisbon. Includes accommodation, domestic transport and some meals, but not flights. intrepidtravel.com

MORE INFO

visitlisboa.com

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A TASTE OF

PUERTO RICO

The Caribbean island's cuisine combines African, Indigenous and Spanish influences to create dishes of distinction

WORDS: ZOE BELL

HISTORIC BEGINNINGS

FLAVOURS OF SAN JUAN FOOD TOUR

Steam rises off the mound of fried green plantains in front of me. Pablo Pont Ruiz, my guide here in Old San Juan, instructs me to grab my pilón y maceta (mortar and pestle) and start mashing. I have Puerto Rico's unofficial national dish, mofongo, lying deconstructed on my plate — and with the plantains piping hot and marinated, cooked chicken and traditional ajillo garlic sauce at the ready, it's time to start assembling.

I'm at El Patio de Sam, a restaurant just steps away from the towering Catedral de San Juan Bautista, the second-oldest church in the Western Hemisphere. Pablo and I get to work, surrounded by families and holidaying Americans seated at yellow and blue tiled tables in the venue's titular open-air patio.

"Mofongo is a blend of Puerto Rico's historic identities," Pablo explains. The first of these influences can be seen in the tools we're using to create the dish. The tall wooden mortar, known as a pilón, and its wooden pestle, the maceta, he says, date back to the Taínos, the Indigenous people who inhabited the island for hundreds of years before the Spanish arrived in 1493. The Taínos used these tools for mashing medicinal herbs and they remain everyday kitchen essentials.

Crushing the plantains is tougher than expected. We're aiming for a consistency that's similar to mashed potato, Pablo says. As they come together, a sharp garlic smell of the ajillo wafts up from the bottom of the pilón, merging into the mash. The plantains used in mofongo

have their origins in the Spanish colonists who brought the starchy vegetable to Puerto Rico from the Canary Islands in the early 1500s. Puerto Rico was under Spanish rule for more than four centuries before the island was ceded to the US in 1898, and this influence is still very much visible in Old San Juan, from the rainbow-coloured, colonial-style architecture to the impressive coastal fortifications.

However, the dish itself is African, brought to Puerto Rico during the Atlantic slave trade and based on the West African staple, fufu. Pablo tells us that mofongo was a hearty dish built to sustain enslaved Africans in Puerto Rico, often constituting the only meal of the day.

Nowadays, Puerto Ricans save this laborious recipe for holidays and special occasions. "Something that was created out of necessity is now eaten purely for indulgence," Pablo says. We begin the next step in our process, pushing the maceta into the middle of the garlicky mash and creating an even crater for the pre-prepared chicken. With the chicken added, it's time for the hard part: Pablo instructs us to flip the pilón over quickly, to release the mofongo onto the plate. Feeling the pressure, I take the pilón, flip it and then carefully lift it away. The mound I've left on the plate stays upright, but the walls of my plantain castle look more like ruins. There's a hole on the left side, leaving my chicken exposed, and I spot a fully intact plantain round left behind in the corner of my pilón. Not perfect, but still enticing. I take a bite of the chicken coated in plantain and enjoy comforting flavours of meaty mash, garlic and salt. To complete the meal, there's a hearty side of rice and beans, and icy pina colodas as well. Another Puerto

Rican invention, the cocktail's combination of white rum, coconut cream and pineapple juice is a celebration in its own right. It's a proper festive feast. flavorsfoodtours.com

FLOWER POWER

FRUTOS DEL GUACABO

"This is going to be a two-minute roller coaster," warns Efrén David Robles, owner of small, family-run farm Frutos Del Guacabo. He hands me a tiny yellow bulb plucked from one of the bushes lining the farm's entryway and, with his encouragement, I cautiously bite into half the flower. A moment later, the numbness sets in; it feels like I'm at the dentist.

The flower is called a lemon drop, Efrén explains. He grows it here at Frutos Del Guacabo in Manatí, on the north side of Puerto Rico, and sells it to restaurants across the island. Chefs create a sorbet with the flower, which acts as a palate cleanser between dishes. As my mouth starts to recover, I can see why — the numb, fizzy sensations subside and I'm left with a clean, citric taste.

Flowers became a major focus for the farm following Hurricane Maria, which struck the island as a Category 4 storm in 2017. Growing the plants helped pollinate the farm's produce after the hurricane, Efrén explains, noting that the vivid colours and sharp flavours are popular with chefs and bartenders. He hands me a bright orange nasturtium, which he suggests eating, stem and all. For such an elegant-looking flower, the fierce, peppery flavour is quite shocking.

Standing in the hot sun of the farm's driveway, we cool off with scoops of mango



A public beach in Rincon
Below, from left: The bar at Cocina
Abierta, San Juan; mofongo, here
topped with shrimp, is a plantain-based
dish with diverse cultural influences



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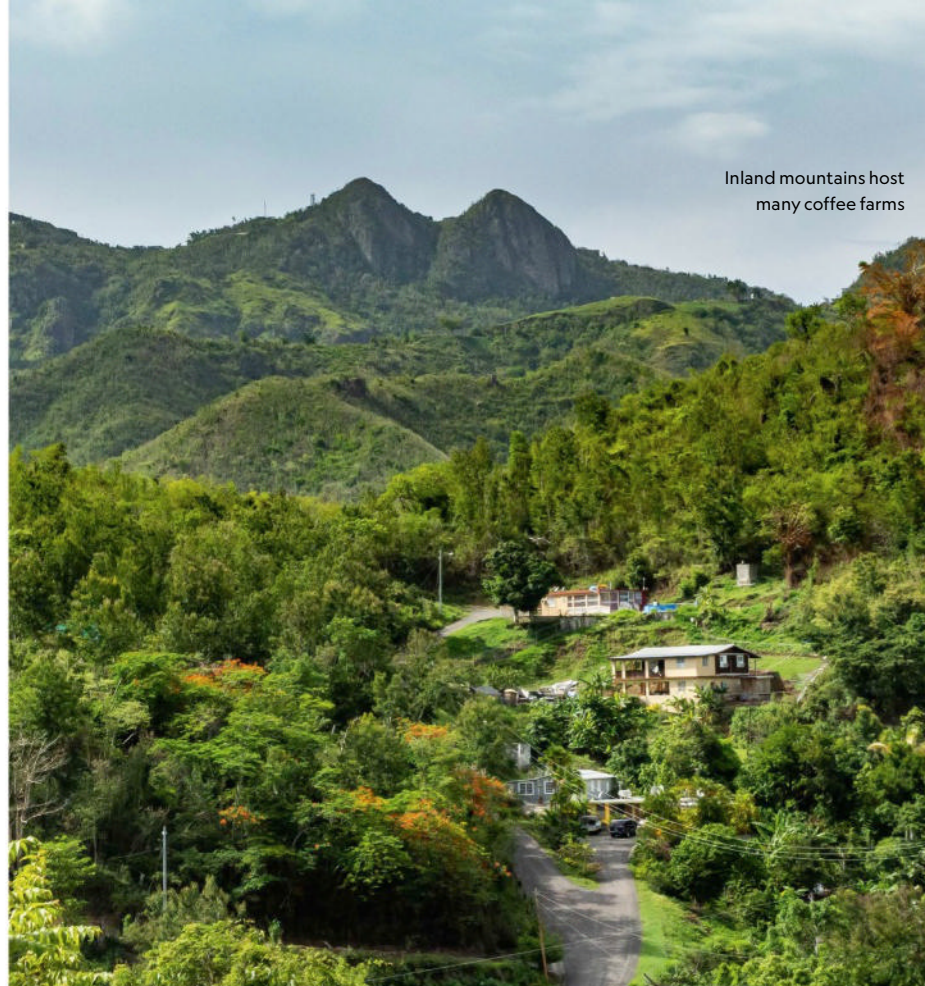
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Inland mountains host many coffee farms

and goat's cheese sorbet, topped with toasted passionfruit seeds. Everything grown here has a purpose, nothing goes to waste. We sample pickled watermelon rind — making use of the white flesh sitting just underneath the fruit's green skin — and spicy watermelon chutney, made from the juicy red centre.

Finally, Efren shows me the greenhouse, where the team grows purple lettuce, mustard greens and coriander using hydroponic methods. What began as a small farm now acts as a cooperative for other farmers on the island, aiming to reduce Puerto Rico's dependence on importation. The island imports 85% of its food — an issue that became even more apparent after Maria. "Teaching people how to grow food, for us, that's a rebel act," Efren says. frutosdelguacabo.com

COFFEE CULTURE

HACIENDA TRES ÁNGELES

"Everyone thought we were nuts," says Naomi Gomez Robles, as we walk along the dirt road encircling the 100-acre coffee farm she owns with her husband, Juan Melendez Mulero.

Naomi, a former nurse from the Bronx, and Juan, a mechanical engineer who grew up on the island, had never farmed before 2012 when they opened Hacienda Tres Ángeles. Meaning 'three angels' — an ode to the pair's three daughters — the farm sits in the hills of Adjuntas, about two hour's drive from the capital. It's been 13 years since Tres Angeles launched, and it's thriving: every acre on the plantation holds 1,000 coffee bushes.

Naomi leads the way through rows of coffee bushes and plantain trees. She draws my attention to a cluster of green coffee pods hanging off one of the bushes. Among them, several red pods stand out. "These are ripe and ready to be picked," she explains.

Harvest season lasts from August to December — overlapping with Puerto Rico's hurricane season (June to November). When Hurricane Maria hit, it wiped out 80% of the harvest and the farm went nine months without power. In support, people around the world placed orders for coffee. "That's how we were able to survive," says Naomi.

The hacienda grows Caturra beans, a variety of Arabica. During production, they're separated by size, as each measurement creates its own roasting profile. Smaller beans produce a rich, chocolate taste, while larger beans yield bold, fruity flavours. We taste the farm's signature medium-to-light roast while sitting on the veranda, gazing out at the hills and breathing in the mountain air. The coffee is sweet, fruity and smooth — even a diehard latte fan like me has no trouble drinking it black.

Naomi and Juan hope to change mindsets about farming — they want to challenge the idea that it's just a recourse of the poor or uneducated. "Farmers are very important," Naomi says, explaining that her grandfather's Puerto Rican dream was to own land and provide for his family. "He was very proud of what we achieved," she continues. "It's something I hope to pass on to my daughters — the importance of going back to the land." haciendatresangeles.com



Arroz con gandules

Embracing Taino, Spanish and African traditions, rice with pigeon peas is a favourite on national holidays. Martin Louzao, chef at Cocina Abierta restaurant in San Juan, serves the dish with sweet longaniza sausage.

SERVES: 6 **TAKES: 40 MINS**

INGREDIENTS

- 4 tbsp sofrito (equal amounts of finely chopped white onion, garlic, aji dulce sweet pepper — preferably green — cubanelle peppers, coriander, culantro and oregano)
- 3 tbsp annatto oil (sold at specialist grocers, made from garlic, neutral cooking oil and annatto seeds, which can be substituted with turmeric and paprika to create the red hue)
- 227g pork or chicken longaniza sausage (or chorizo)
- 680g medium grain rice
- 710ml chicken, pork or vegetable stock
- 1 plantain, grated
- 227g cooked pigeon peas
- plantain leaves, for baking
- coriander leaves, to garnish

METHOD

- 1 Sauté the sofrito in the annatto oil along with the sausage in a traditional caldero or cast-iron pan on a high heat, until you can smell the spices and the sausage starts to brown.
- 2 Add the rice and lightly toast.
- 3 Add the stock, plantain and pigeon peas. Salt the broth mixture generously.
- 4 Continue to cook on a high heat until the top of the rice is dry. Turn off the heat and start folding the rice so that the bottom portion moves to the top, and vice versa.
- 5 Cover with plantain leaves (or baking paper) and close the lid. Cook on low for 20 mins.
- 6 Serve hot and garnish with coriander leaves, if desired.



COASTAL TRADITIONS

EL BURÉN DE LULA

We drive through the quiet, rural roads of Loíza on Sunday morning, before arriving at a one-storey, wooden building. I look around confused, thinking we're making a U-turn. Instead, we're welcomed into a restaurant with a busy open-air kitchen and greeted by a team of women prepping for the morning ahead.

Soon, cars begin filling the driveway, parking out along the road, and eager visitors order fried Puerto Rican classics. There are simple corn arepas, patties with a cornbread-like texture, and empanadas de jueyes, their juicy crab filling coated in a mix of green plantain and yautía — a popular island root vegetable with a nutty, earthy flavour.

We sample homemade sweet tortillas, which combine sugar, vanilla, coconut milk and salt to create a thick, sweet crepe. They're perfect with dulce de coco — coconut candy — spooned from small plastic cups.

Located about a 35-minute drive from San Juan in the coastal municipality of Loíza, El

Burén de Lula has been serving these dishes for decades. In the heat of the kitchen, one of the chefs keeps her eyes on the fried treats left on the grill, tucked into plantain leaves. Every so often, she lifts the leaves to check if the dough is perfectly golden and ready to serve.

In an adjacent building, we find Lula herself sitting on the couch. "The head still works, but the body, not so much," she says.

Lula, whose full name is María Dolores De Jesús, may cook less than she once did but she still has plenty of stories to tell. She speaks to me about her mother, who made these dishes when Lula was a child, and her father, who worked harvesting coconuts from trees. Her Spanish flows quickly and with so many interjections, my translator struggles to get a word in edgeways. But it doesn't matter; she's a magnetic presence and I'm captivated.

El Burén de Lula only opens on Sundays now — and the occasional Saturday, when there's a national holiday. And it's best to get there early, I soon learn. Orders start coming in around 11am and by 1pm, they're sold out. facebook.com/elburendelula

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE

Several airlines operate one-stop flights from London to San Juan via their American or European hubs, including Avianca, Iberia and JetBlue.

WHERE TO STAY

Overlooking the golden sands of Isla Verde beach, the 80-room Aire de Olive offers a convenient base for exploring San Juan and the island's northern coast, with doubles from \$224 (£167), room only. airedeolive.com

MORE INFO

discoverpuertorico.com

From left: Crab-filled empanadas de jueyes are a Puerto Rican favourite; a section of San Juan's 17th-century city walls



LOCAL FLAVOURS

Pina colada

This cocktail has stirred controversy since 1954, when two rival bartenders at San Juan's Caribe Hilton Hotel both claimed to have concocted the drink, combining coconut cream, pineapple juice and white rum. Nearby Barrachina also insists it made the 'true' pina colada in 1963. Either way, it's undoubtedly Puerto Rican.

Sofrito

Every Puerto Rican family has their go-to recipe for the herby, green base of popular island dishes. It's typically a blend of finely chopped aji dulce (a variety of sweet pepper), cubanella peppers, onion, garlic, coriander and culantro — similar to coriander, but with a punchier flavour.



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ARIZONA

Tuck in to Tucson

With a cuisine that brings together Indigenous and Mexican influences, Tucson is a culinary beacon in the Sonoran Desert. Words: Asonta Benetti

The laid-back desert city of Tucson acts as a gateway to the cuisine of southern Arizona. Honoured in 2015 as the first UNESCO City of Gastronomy in the US, the area has a gastronomic heritage that blends its Indigenous history and 18th-century Spanish influences with a growing Mexican population. The result is unique to Tucson, with the city's story told through colourful and creative dishes. The past century has also seen the blossoming of its wine industry, supported by the nearby American Viticultural Area (AVA), Sonoita-Elgin. With such rich pickings to be found, here are Tucson's unmissable flavours.

INDIGENOUS INGREDIENTS

Tucson's Native American history spans thousands of years, starting with the Hohokam and including the Tohono O'odham and Pascua Yaqui peoples. The ingredients they used, such as cushaw squash and chiltepin pepper, have slowly made their way onto the city's restaurant menus.

One of the best known local ingredients is the tepary bean, which thrives in Arizona's desert climate. It can be sampled at organic fine-dining spot BATA, where it's served alongside oak-smoked tomato and black garlic. Family-run Cafe Santa Rosa's menu reflects the owners' Tohono O'odham roots, featuring traditional ingredients like the

cholla bud — the undeveloped flower of the cholla cactus — as well as squash and chilli. Tuck in to the cafe's steak salad with cholla buds, mixed greens and avocado.

SONORAN-STYLE MEXICAN FOOD

Sonora, the Mexican state that borders Arizona, and the Sonoran Desert, which crosses both Mexico and Arizona, have both helped to shape Tucson cuisine. Unlike much of the food in Mexico, which is heavily reliant on corn and masa (ground-corn dough), the Sonoran style of cooking makes greater use of wheat and flour tortillas. And, due to the presence of cattle ranches in the Sonoran Desert, beef is king.

Popular dishes include carne asada (grilled beef) and machaca (or 'carne seca'), a dried and spiced shredded meat from Northern Mexico. You can try it in a burro — akin to a burrito — at Tucson stalwart La Indita. Meanwhile, Rolli's Mexican Patio is highly rated for its cylindrical carne asada tacos. But don't skip the much-hyped birria ramen — a fusion born of Mexican beef birria stew and Japanese soba noodles topped with jalapenos.

Beef isn't the only thing on the menu, though, and historic El Charro Cafe's corn-based tamales with pork carnitas and chicken tomatillo are also a must-try. While, for the indecisive, the president's plate at Mi Niditoan is a selection created for Bill Clinton's 1999 visit and includes beans, beef and chicken.

WINE COUNTRY IN THE CITY

An hour's drive south east of Tucson, Sonoita-Elgin was the first location in Arizona to become AVA-designated. Conditions here — similar to those found in Argentina and California — have helped to put the state on the wine map.

The area is perfectly positioned for a day trip from the city to tour wineries like Callaghan Vineyards, which produces an award-winning malvasia bianca white as well as a fruity sparkling rosé, and Los Milics Vineyards, whose tempranillo and syrah are worth a sip. Those staying put in Tucson can check out Arizona Wine Collective, a tasting bar and shop dedicated to promoting some of the state's best wines.

FESTIVALS AND FARMERS' MARKETS

The Agave Heritage Festival is an annual celebration of the succulent plant used to produce tequila and mezcal, featuring everything from tastings to pit roastings.

Also, mark your calendar for SAVOR, a one-day festival honouring Southern Arizona's food and drink heritage. Renowned chefs, wineries and breweries come together at the Tucson Botanical Gardens to display their talents while showcasing native ingredients.

For hyper-local produce, the Heirloom Farmers Markets run in five different locations year-round — ideal for picking up homemade produce like tortillas and salsas.



THREE ARIZONA SPECIALITIES

FRYBREAD: Said to have been created out of necessity by the Navajo people (using unfamiliar ingredients like flour and lard, provided by the US government during their forced relocation), this chewy bread is now an iconic piece of Native American history. Also referred to as a popover, sample it in taco form at Cafe Santa Rosa.

PRICKLY PEAR MARGARITA: This spin on a classic marries tequila with the fruit of the prickly pear cactus. The fruit is tart with a subtle sweetness and comparable in flavour to watermelon. Try it at Guadalajara Original Grill.

CHIMICHANGA: This meat-filled burrito — deep-fried and topped with cheese and sour cream — isn't a traditional Mexican dish but is on the menu at most of Tucson's Mexican restaurants. Tuck in at El Minuto Cafe.



Clockwise from far left: Downtown Tucson's high-rises and historic St Augustine Cathedral; sundried chillies; frybread tacos

PLAN YOUR TRIP

There are no direct flights from the UK to Tucson International Airport but travellers can fly nonstop from Heathrow to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and take a connecting flight, or rent a car for the two-hour drive. Find out more at visitarizona.com/uk

ARIZONA

ON LOCATION

MARLOW

An atmospheric wine bar and lively market sit alongside Michelin-starred gastropubs in this Buckinghamshire town

WORDS: CLARE VOOHT. ILLUSTRATION: TANYA COOPER

Hugging the River Thames at the foot of the Chiltern Hills in Buckinghamshire, the well-heeled Georgian market town of Marlow, has attracted numerous authors over the centuries — Mary Shelley, TS Eliot and Jerome K Jerome all lived here at various points. Now, however, it's a destination for food-lovers. Since Tom Kerridge opened his now two-Michelin-starred pub **The Hand and Flowers** (thehandandflowers.co.uk) two decades ago, Marlow has become known for its culinary scene — and while it continues to do a strong line in posh pubs, fantastic dining comes in all shapes and sizes here.

Among the newest additions is a permanent residency for **Ginger Wings** (gingerwings.com), a chicken shop from Jack Blumenthal (son of Heston) at craft beer spot The Crafty Taproom on the High Street. Another is **The Troublesome Lodger**, a 12-seater chef's table experience serving six-course set menus by chef Simon Bonwick that's an ongoing residency upstairs at **The Oarsman** (theoarsman.co.uk), at the north end of town. The Oarsman itself is a modern 'bistropub' with a flair for bold, meaty flavours — expect combinations like trotters, bacon and beef dripping soaking into crisp toast, and dishes packed with local, seasonal produce. "What excites me about being in Marlow is the plethora of small, independent suppliers, all within touching distance — it's an environment similar to that of small towns in European countries, where they're almost self-sufficient," says the pub's head chef, Scott Smith.

On the first and third Saturday of each month (except January), there's locally made gelato, biltong, hefty sourdough loaves and locally caught and cured trout to be found at **Marlow Market** (transitionmarlow.org/home/market). "It's part of our ethos to keep it as local as we can, with a radius of 55 miles maximum," says James Brownbill, one of the market's organisers and co-founder of The

Marlow Cheese Co, which produces both hard and soft varieties and is known for its toastie truck.

For another take on local produce, cross over Marlow Bridge, a smaller version of Budapest's Széchenyi Chain Bridge, designed by the same civil engineer, William Tierney Clark. **Sindhu by Atul Kochhar** (sindhurestaurant.co.uk) serves tasting menus of regional Indian dishes made using the best British produce, such as halibut with a Keralan-inspired tobiko roe moilee sauce, and Madurai duck kheema. The long interior space gives the feel of dining on a sumptuously decorated riverboat on the Brahmaputra, rather than overlooking the Thames.

A 10-minute walk back across the bridge and up the High Street brings you to Michelin-starred pub **The Coach** (thecoachmarlow.co.uk), part of the Kerridge empire, but headed up by chef Sarah Hayward, with forest-green tiles and red-leather banquette seating. Bar stools set around the open kitchen give diners a ringside view of chefs whipping up standout dishes that take their cues from old British ingredients — deep-fried hake comes with a little pot of pease pudding, a forgotten Victorian staple; mussels come in a creamy stout sauce; and a deeply rich, slightly umami sticky toffee pudding is made with beef suet.

Grape Expectations (grape-expectations.co.uk) is a charming, wood-beamed wine shop and bar, styled with fairy lights — the perfect place to end the night. The wine list features both new and old world varieties, alongside English bottles, including local Marlow sparkling wines from Harrow & Hope, produced just outside town.

HOW TO DO IT: Trains from Paddington to Marlow take around an hour, with a change at Maidenhead. The Chequers Pub & Dining Room, on the High Street, has doubles from £130, including breakfast. thechequersmarlow.co.uk

REBELLION TAP YARD

Operating from Bencombe Farm on the edge of town, The Marlow Brewery brews a variety of craft beer creations, including Rebellion IPAs, blonde beers, lagers, hazy pale ales and many more. All of these, plus local gins, are on offer, along with rotating street-food trucks, at the Tap Yard bar and shop. rebellionbeer.co.uk

REBELLION TAP YARD



THE JARSMAN

THE COACH

THE VANILLA POD

THE HAND AND FLOWERS

LAURENT'S

GRAPE EXPECTATIONS

GINGER WINGS

MARLOW MARKET

SINDHU BY ATUL KOCHHAR

THE VANILLA POD

Housed in a building where TS Eliot once lived, fine-dining favourite The Vanilla Pod turns out well-executed dishes using seasonal ingredients and classic French techniques. Expect the likes of roast monkfish with soured spinach and vanilla cannellini beans, or lamb with crispy black garlic potatoes and madeira jus. thevanillapod.co.uk

LAURENTS

A window filled with pretty pastries and cakes draws a discerning clientele to Laurents, as do its savoury French and Italian foods, like bottled langoustine soup, lobster terrine, fresh pasta and artisan olive oil. Coffees, smoothies, sandwiches and salads are served in a rustic cafe at the back. laurentsdeli.co.uk

BOOKS

SIMPLE PLEASURES

IN HIS LATEST COOKBOOK, JEFF KOEHLER EXPLORES THE CUISINE OF THE BALEARIC ISLANDS, A REGION WITH A UNIQUE CULINARY IDENTITY SHAPED BY SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND SEASONALITY

What's your connection with the Balearic Islands?

In 1996, I settled in Barcelona and married a Catalan woman I'd met in London. A few years later, we visited Menorca for the first time. We fell in love with the island and, in 2014, bought a traditional 19th-century townhouse in Es Mercadal. Menorca has become a second home; I spend about four months a year there. Apart from having a great food store and weekly market, most of our neighbours have little gardens; when things come into season, people are always bringing over big baskets of lemons or figs.

Meals rely heavily on local produce and preserves, and have fewer ingredients. I head to the fish market hoping rather than planning to buy a specific item. I know that what ends up in my shopping basket will depend on what the sea has supplied that morning. Menorca has changed me as a cook — I've gained a stronger dependency on the highly local seasons, but also a deeper appreciation for them.

Do you remember your initial reactions to the cuisine?

I was really taken by the tomatoes. They do lots of dry farming, where they allow the humidity to water the tomatoes, so they tend to be smaller and extremely flavourful. Then there's the iconic *ensaïmada*, a fermented dough with lots of lard in a spiral shape — you have plain ones, but sometimes they add a piece of apricot. They also add *sobrassada*, a paprika-rich sausage, and the combination is incredible. Even today, it's shocking how many dishes you'll find *sobrassada* in. It gives this incredible drop of flavour, colour and texture to everything from bread rolls to sweets. When you have a more limited pantry, you get more creative with how you use it. It's the idea that first you have to eat, then eventually you want to eat well.

How does the cuisine of the Balearic Islands differ from mainland Spain?

Although the islands were along key trade paths in the Mediterranean, they were long secluded and insular. Incorporating new ingredients and techniques over the centuries, they developed a distinctive Mediterranean gastronomy marked by seasonality and isolation. The cuisines are built around what can be grown and found on the islands. When we go in the spring, we know there are certain paths where we'll find wild asparagus



growing. But we also know that's a very short time — that's one of the great pleasures. For me, a big shock was that there aren't a lot of books about this topic. I think it's one of the last great unexplored cuisines.

And what about variation between the islands?

Each of the four islands has its own distinctive flavours and specialties: Majorca's soupy *arròs brut* (dirty rice); Menorca's *oliaigua* (tomato soup); Ibiza's *bullit de peix* and *arròs a banda* (two-course fish stew); and Formentera's *enciam pagès* (farmer's salad). But there are more constants. Olive oil is the key fat, though lard remains central to many baked goods. Pulses are common, as are stuffed vegetables. There's plenty of seafood, but pork is fundamental. Along with year-round favourites like the *ensaïmada*, there's a venerable calendar of sweet treats that marks the year. Preserves — from stewed tomatoes to fig jam — remain a key element in the islands' cooking. Only some of what could be grown, harvested, butchered or caught is enjoyed fresh: the rest is preserved for later.

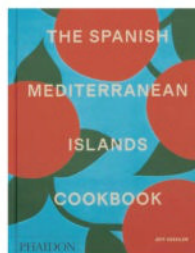
Has the food scene changed as a result of the islands being better connected to the mainland?

Menorca certainly has far more international and sophisticated choices now. In restaurants, you see fancier presentations — and, like everywhere, avocado toast now feels inescapable. But it's during the festivals that you really see traditional dishes. There's a link between food and the culture, and every festivity has its iconic food. For example, you have the Wine Harvest Festival in a town in Menorca; they prepare a dish of *fideus de vermar*, little fideos noodles in broth. The festivities are when people want those traditional dishes, and that's what they're going to get.

What's people's attitude towards food?

There's always been a respect for the ingredients, how difficult it was to produce food and that nothing is wasted. Take one of the most famous desserts in the islands, *greixonera* — it's kind of a bread pudding made with old pieces of *ensaïmada*. It's a phenomenal dessert, but it exists because they thought, 'how can we utilise old pastries?' That, to me, is a respect for the ingredient, but also the effort that goes into producing the food.

Interview: Rachael Perrett



The Spanish Mediterranean Islands Cookbook, by Jeff Koehler (£29.95, Phaidon)



The landscape of northern Ibiza
Clockwise from right: Stewed lentils
with green beans and a side of
green salad; a shop in the old part of
Ciutadella, Menorca; farmer's salad,
a classic dish from Ibiza and Formentera



Coca flatbread with Swiss chard, spring onions and tomatoes

There have been recipes for thin-crust coca flatbreads appearing as far back as the 15th century, and while the classic baker's version doesn't include yeast in the dough, many modern home cooks (and bakeries) include it. Lard gives the dough – in this recipe, unleavened – its flaky texture. One of Majorca's most popular iterations of coca contains Swiss chard, spring onions and plenty of parsley, a combination that's usually called, somewhat generically, coca de verduras (vegetables). The fresh greens are tossed with olive oil and sweet paprika before being spread across the coca base, and take on a lovely dark green colour when baked. Brilliant red tomato slices across the top add flavour, but also visual appeal. This has become a particular favourite in my house over the past few summers.

SERVES: 6

TAKES: 1 HR 30 MINS

INGREDIENTS FOR THE COCA FLATBREAD

60ml olive oil
50g lard, room temperature
1 tsp salt
350g plain flour

FOR THE TOPPING

450g trimmed Swiss chard, chopped
1 large bunch (about 300g) spring onions, trimmed, white and tender green parts cut crosswise into 1cm pieces
20g finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
1 heaped tbsp sweet paprika
3 tbsp olive oil
2 plum tomatoes, cut crosswise into 1cm-thick slices
pine nuts (optional)

METHOD

- 1 Start by making the coca flatbread. Add the oil, lard, salt and 120ml warm water into a large mixing bowl and stir to blend. Gradually add the flour, working by hand until it's fully

incorporated. Knead until soft and it easily comes away from the hands while still being just a touch sticky.

- 2 Put the dough in the middle of a 30cm x 40cm baking sheet and spread it out with your fingers, trying to make it as even and thin as possible. Use the tines of a fork to shape the edges. Let the dough rest while preparing the toppings.

- 3 Heat the oven to 200C, fan 180C. Put the Swiss chard in an extra-large mixing bowl. Add the spring onions to the bowl, followed by the parsley, paprika and oil. Season with salt and pepper, and toss to blend well. Spread the mixture evenly across the dough base. Arrange the tomato slices across the top.
- 4 Bake for 50 mins, until the base is cooked through, firm and somewhat flaky (it'll come away easily from the baking sheet). The greens should be wilted and darker, and the tomatoes soft. A few mins before the end, scatter some pine nuts across the top, if desired.

- 5 Remove from the oven and allow to cool before cutting into rectangular pieces using a pizza wheel, scissors or knife. Serve.





Fried sardines with sweet tomato and onion sofregit

While sofregit (or sofrito) — slow-cooked onions and tomatoes — is usually a base for stews and rice dishes, it can be a relish-like stand-alone topping. Spooned over fried sardines, it's perfect. Other types of 'blue fish' are also excellent, as are sea bass and sea bream. While many cooks say it's best to leave the fish with the sofregit for an hour or two before serving to let the flavours deepen, I like the fish just-fried and still a bit hot under that blanket of sofregit. Calculate five or so medium sardines per person. I like to use ones that weigh about 50g each; Mediterranean sardines tend to be a touch smaller than their Atlantic counterparts.

SERVES: 4

TAKES: 1 HR 30 MINS

INGREDIENTS FOR THE SOFREGIT

4 tbsp olive oil

2 yellow onions, finely chopped
4 cloves garlic, skins on, lightly crushed under the palm
4 or 5 ripe tomatoes (about 700g), halved and grated
1 bay leaf
1 heaped tbsp finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
½ tsp sweet paprika
1 tsp sugar

FOR THE SARDINES

1kg fresh whole sardines or other small 'blue fish'
65g plain flour, for dusting
neutral oil, for frying

METHOD

1 To prepare the sofregit, heat the olive oil in a shallow, flameproof casserole pan, frying pan or sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the onions and garlic, and cook for 10-12 mins until soft. Add the tomatoes, bay leaf, parsley,

paprika and sugar, then reduce the heat to medium-low and cook for 20-30 mins, stirring frequently, until dark red and pasty. Towards the end, add a few tbsp of water to keep it from scorching.

2 Meanwhile, prepare the sardines. Scale, clean and remove the heads and entrails. Pat dry with paper towels. Season with salt and pepper. Put the flour in a bowl and line a plate with absorbent paper towels.

3 Heat at least 2cm of oil in a small frying pan over a high heat, until the surface shimmers. Lightly flour the fish and fry until cooked through and the skin is golden and a touch crispy (turn once using two spatulas), 2-4 mins total depending on the size of the fish. Remove with tongs and set on the paper towels to soak up the excess oil. Repeat with the remaining fish.

4 Arrange the fish on a platter. Spoon over the sofregit and serve.



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Spongy orange, olive oil and yoghurt cake

Moist, spongy and easy to make, the basic cake in the Balearics is known generally as *pa de pessic*, and calls for olive oil and yoghurt rather than butter and milk. With the important orange industry around Sóller, on the slopes of Majorca's Serra de Tramuntana range, there's little wonder that some zest and juice would find its way into this home staple. While it's usually served after lunch or dinner, this cake is, for me, best for breakfast with my morning coffee.


SERVES: 10-12

TAKES: 45 MINS

INGREDIENTS

butter, for greasing
250g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
120ml plain unsweetened yoghurt
zest and juice (about 100ml) of 1 orange
100ml mild olive oil or neutral oil
1 tbsp baking powder
3 large eggs, separated
180g sugar
icing sugar, for dusting

METHOD

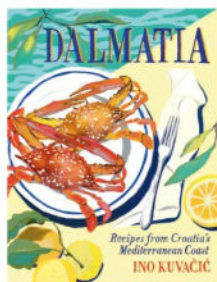
- 1 Heat the oven to 180C, fan 160C. Grease a 25cm round or springform cake tin with butter and dust with flour, shaking out the excess. Alternatively, line with baking paper.
- 2 Beat the egg yolks and sugar in a mixing bowl with a hand-held electric whisk until well combined. Add the yoghurt, oil, orange zest and orange juice, and blend in. Add the flour and baking powder and mix until the batter is combined but not overly beaten.
- 3 Whisk the egg whites to soft peaks in another bowl. Fold them into the batter, working the spatula from the bottom up to retain as much volume in the whites as possible. Transfer the mixture into the cake tin.
- 4 Bake until cooked through and still spongy (a cocktail stick poked into the centre should come out clean), about 30 mins. Don't open the oven during baking. Remove from the oven and let cool before turning out of the tin.
- 5 Dust the cake with icing sugar before slicing and serving. It can be stored covered snugly with cling film or in an airtight container for up to five days. 



NEW RELEASES

COASTAL CUISINE

SEAFOOD SPECIALITIES FROM CROATIA'S DALMATIAN SHORES



OUR PICK

DALMATIA

Ino Kuvačić

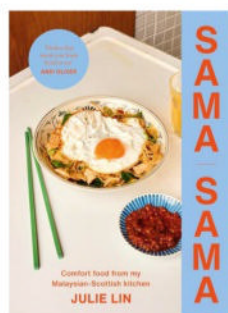
With more than 3,600 miles of coastline, Croatia's Dalmatia region is intrinsically tied to the sea. This is apparent in its cuisine, where fish and seafood plucked directly from the Adriatic reigns supreme, whether it's delicately sweet and silky oysters or smoky grilled sea bream.

Melbourne-based restaurateur Ino Kuvačić — originally from Split, Dalmatia's largest city — believes the flavours of his homeland deserve to be celebrated. In his latest cookbook, he transports readers to the cobbled streets of the region's medieval towns, offering more than 100 recipes, most of which are designed to be shared.

Classic dishes such as brudet (seafood stew) and splitska paštica (Split-style beef with red wine, prunes and apples) take centre stage, while small plates, including kozice s pršutom (prawns wrapped in prosciutto with goat's cheese) serve as the perfect introduction to the region's cuisine. To finish, there are indulgent desserts, including Dubrovnik crème caramel, whose French and Spanish origins reflect Dalmatia's rich blend of cultural influences. £25, *Hardie Grant*



FOUR TO TRY

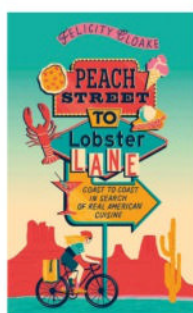


FUSION FEAST

Sama Sama

Julie Lin

In her new book, chef and restaurateur Lin celebrates her Malaysian-Scottish heritage. Personal stories explore the interconnectivity of food and identity, while recipes such as chilli crisp puttanesca and kaya croissant-and-butter pudding showcase Lin's innovative approach to Malaysian flavours. £28, *Ebury Press*



HIT THE ROAD

Peach Street to Lobster Lane

Felicity Cloake

Food writer Cloake's latest release traces the origins of the most iconic dishes in the US, via a cycle ride across the country. She uncovers the stories behind specialties like crawfish stew, marionberry pie and sauerkraut balls — offering insights into the immigrant communities that have shaped the US's ever-evolving food scene. £16.99, *HarperCollins*



Dalmatian mushrooms

This recipe is a very traditional way of cooking mushrooms and it makes a great lunch for cool days, served with pilau rice. In the days before refined white sugar, varenik – or grape molasses – was used as a sweetener in Croatia. The flavour is unique, with hints of caramel, fresh fruit, flowers and coffee. When I make a batch, it lasts me a long time, and I add it to salads, sauces, stews and sometimes soups.

SERVES: 6-8 **TAKES: 3 HRS 15 MINS**

INGREDIENTS

5kg red grapes
2kg mushrooms (such as field or slippery jacks)
5 garlic cloves, crushed
250ml extra virgin olive oil
1kg brown onions, thinly sliced
100ml red wine vinegar
1½ tbsps sugar
100ml prošek (Dalmatian fortified wine) or port
2 tbsps tomato puree
½ bunch flat-leaf parsley, chopped, to garnish

METHOD

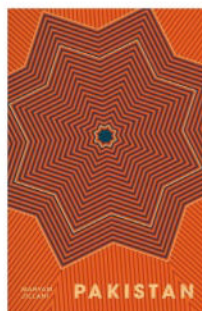
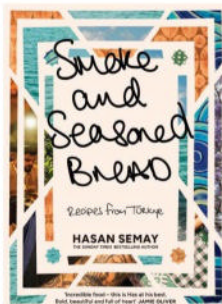
- 1 For the varenik, pick the grapes from the stems. Put the grapes through a juicer, then strain the juice through a fine-mesh sieve. Put the juice in a large saucepan over a high heat and cook until it reduces to a 10th of its original volume, or until the juice becomes a syrup and starts to foam. You should have about 500ml of varenik. Allow to cool.
- 2 Clean the soil from the mushrooms with a brush, then cut into 1cm-thick slices.
- 3 In a heavy-based pan, sauté the garlic in the olive oil over a high heat for a few seconds, then add the onion. Season with salt and pepper, cover and sauté over a low heat for 20 mins, stirring occasionally, until the onion is translucent and you have a thick paste.
- 4 Add the sliced mushrooms, cover and sauté for a further 30 mins until the mixture has thickened.
- 5 In a bowl, mix the red wine vinegar with the sugar and 100ml water, stirring until the sugar has dissolved. Add this syrup to the pan, along with the prošek, 100ml of the varenik and tomato puree. Slowly braise, stirring occasionally, for about 2 hrs or until the stew thickens. Garnish with parsley and serve.

TURKISH TABLE

Smoke and Seasoned Bread

Hasan Semay

Half-Turkish Cypriot, half-British chef Semay's latest book resulted from a solo journey through Turkey, during which he picked up both stories and recipes. Alongside chapters dedicated to bread and mezze are explorations of regional delicacies like Adanan kofte and Gaziantep pistachios. £28, Ebury Press

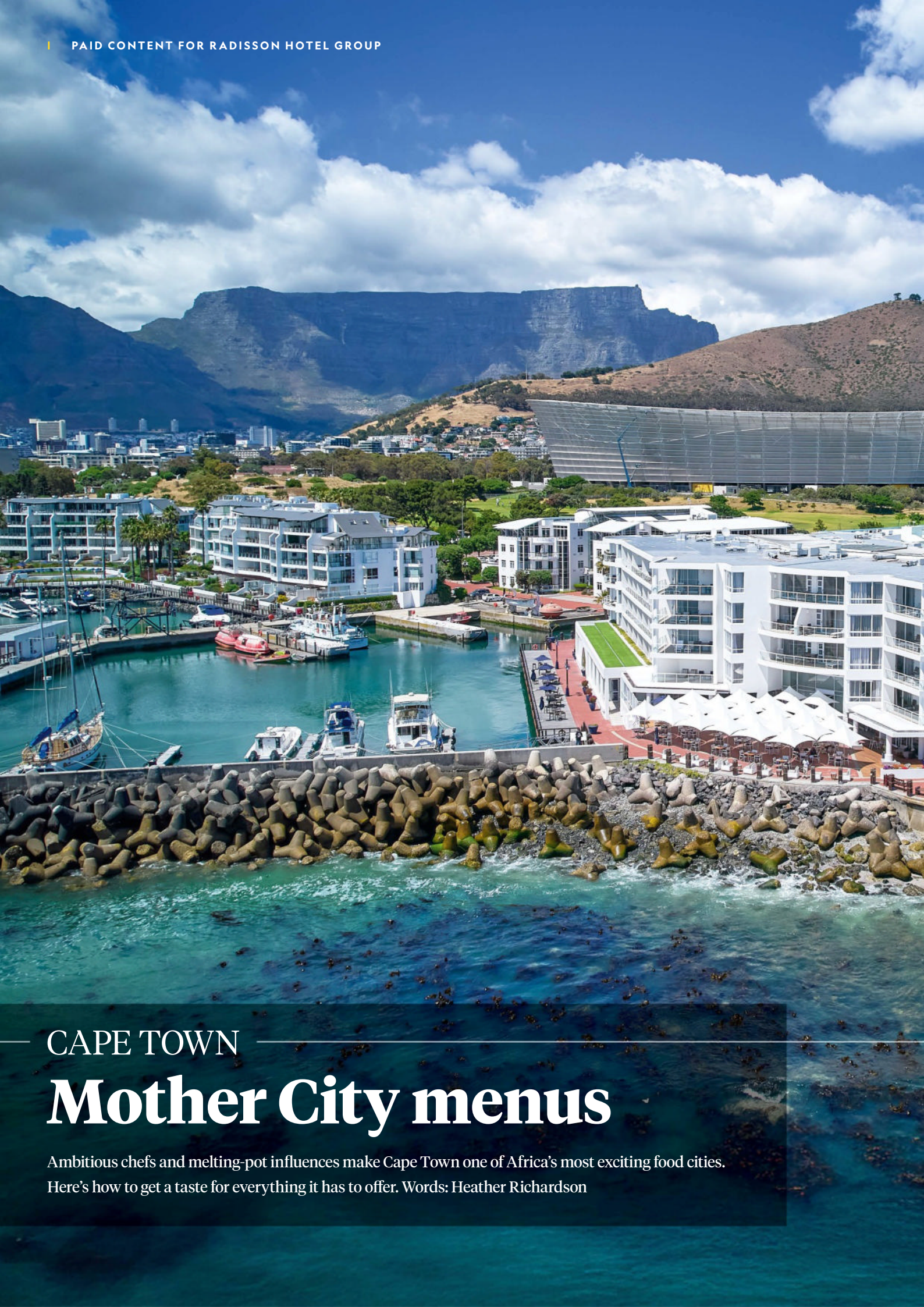


PAST & PRESENT

Pakistan

Maryam Jillani

Born and raised in Islamabad, food writer Jillani's debut cookbook contextualises Pakistani cuisine through essays on each region. Encompassing Afghan, Chinese, Indian and Iranian influences, the 100-plus recipes include boldly flavoured dishes like spiced chicken dumplings, saffron flatbread and Parsi wedding custard. £26, Hardie Grant



CAPE TOWN

Mother City menus

Ambitious chefs and melting-pot influences make Cape Town one of Africa's most exciting food cities. Here's how to get a taste for everything it has to offer. Words: Heather Richardson



Take a winning mix of culinary influences, both Indigenous and international, mix it with global influences, and blend with the freshest ingredients from land and sea, and you get one of the world's best food cities. Anyone who has eaten their way around this mountain-dotted coastal capital will know that its latest generation of chefs are as versed in French gastronomy as they are in the vibrant curries of Cape Malay cuisine. Here's how to enjoy a long weekend sampling Cape Town's rich flavours.

DAY ONE: LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

Start with a guided jaunt through the city centre with Cape Fusion, a locally led tour company that blends food with cultural insights. Expect to try South Africa's national dish of bobotie — baked curried mince that's layered, lasagne-like, with an egg-based topping. The tour often includes a unique coffee experience at local cafe owner Khadim Diagne's apartment, where he will wax lyrical about traditional Senegalese coffee while pouring you a cup. This heady blend of beans and djar — a peppery spice — is said to have medicinal powers.

The tour may also take you to the hillside neighbourhood of Bo-Kaap, with its cobbled streets, colourful houses and South Africa's oldest mosque. This area is the historic home of the Cape Malay community, descendants of enslaved and free Muslims who came here during Dutch and British rule. Cape Malay cuisine — a blend of African, Asian and European flavours — is warmly spiced and delicious. Be sure to try some samosas or koeksisters — sweet, deep-fried dough.

If there's room for dinner, the tasting menu at fine-dining restaurant Salsify at the Round House is centred on local ingredients

and includes coal-roasted oysters and South African Wagyu sirloin with chakalaka — a spicy vegetable relish.

DAY TWO: WATERFRONT WANDERS

One advantage of staying at the Radisson Collection Hotel, Waterfront Cape Town is that you're right on the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, a 123-hectare quayside neighbourhood that started life as a working dock more than 350 years ago. It's also where you'll find many of the city's main attractions, including the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA), known for its sprawling collection of art from Africa and beyond displayed across nine floors.

A dark but moving look at South Africa's recent past can be found on Robben Island. Ferries depart the Waterfront to the site where anti-apartheid activists, including the country's late president Nelson Mandela, were once imprisoned.

Back on the mainland, make time to visit The Watershed, an local indoor craft market. It's next door to the Time Out Market, where pretty much everything's on the menu, from tuna sashimi at The Melting Pot to traditional Cape Malay tomato bredie (stew) at Barakat.

For sundowners and a memorable dinner overlooking the Atlantic, Tobago's Restaurant, Bar and Terrace beckons back at the hotel. Thoughtfully curated dishes are on the menu including fresh seafood and casual classics, served in a stylish yet relaxed setting.

DAY THREE: OUTDOOR DINING

Dedicate your last day to all things outdoors — one of Cape Town's strong suits, with its myriad beaches, mountains and vineyards.

If you can stomach an early start, kick off with a pre-dawn hike to the top of Lion's Head, a small but steep peak that overlooks the city on one side and the Atlantic on the other. If you have a flask, bring coffee to sip at the top as the sun rises. Otherwise, grab a brew after at The Fix Beans and Bagels truck. For an easier ascent, you can take the cable car up Table Mountain for a coffee or glass of wine at KLOUD bar, while enjoying incredible city views.

Cap off your trip with a visit to Constantia, 20 minutes south of the city centre, which is home to one of the southern hemisphere's oldest wine-making cultures. Local winery Constantia Glen's extensive bottle list is accompanied by cheese or biltong platters. For dinner, Chefs Warehouse Beau Constantia is regarded as one of the city's best restaurants, with an unfussy tasting menu and well-crafted wine list, showcasing why Cape Town is good to the last drop.

Clockwise from left: Radisson Collection Hotel, Waterfront Cape Town; tuna sashimi with a smoked soya edamame cracker and seeds from Time Out Market; the Constantia wine region on the Western Cape

PLAN YOUR TRIP

There are daily direct flights from London to Cape Town International Airport. Ubers and taxis are available at the airport and around the city. Stay at the Radisson Collection Hotel, Waterfront Cape Town. Visit radissonhotels.com





DINE OUT

TOM BROWN AT THE CAPITAL

📍 LONDON • [TOMBROWNATTHECAPITAL.COM](https://tombrowнатhecapital.com)

SEAFOOD, IN ALL SHAPES AND GUISES, IS THE STAR OF THE SHOW AT TOM BROWN'S NEW KNIGHTSBRIDGE VENTURE

It's clear from the first course that chef Tom Brown has brought east London chutzpah to his new Knightsbridge address. The fried bread, a cockney cafe favourite, has been elevated to a glossy oyster toast that's an inch deep and layered, mille-feuille-like, with seaweed. Brown's new venture might be in the polite part of town, but the sweet-saline remnants demand to be licked off fingers; they're too good to be wiped up with a linen napkin.

Born and trained on the Cornish coast under the likes of Nathan Outlaw and Rick Stein, Brown is a fish-forward chef who made his Michelin mark with Hackney Wick's recently closed Cornerstone. His subsequent opening was another east London offering, Pearly Queen, but his latest move is to a postcode that's decidedly more diamonds and pearls.

A fusty west London hotel might seem an odd move for a chef whose food is refined but not overly formal. But this 28-cover restaurant sees

Brown back at The Capital Hotel, where he made a name for himself as head chef at Outlaw's.

Dinner starts with a sweet plum sake in the bar, after which we're ushered into the kitchen for an amuse bouche. The one-bite mussel with port and beetroot on filo pastry sets the tone for a menu that shows seafood serious respect, as the buttery bivalve is allowed to shine.

Bathed in blues, greens and aquamarines, the dining room is a refreshing step away from the hotel's wood panelling and Tiffany lamps — although you have to step back into it to use the loos, which somewhat breaks the spell. There is some magic in the subsequent nine courses, however; the oyster toast is followed by a plate of breads and 'charcuterie' made from seafood offcuts — a soft mortadella of cod, herb-crusted salmon bresaola and delicate chalk stream trout ham. It's a clever dish, particularly with the accompanying lobster butter and crab oil balsamic.

The ricotta 'pasta', made with blended fish heads rather than wheat, is another magic trick, albeit one of curious texture — more mochi than tortelloni. Fatty and regular cuts of tuna arranged into sashimi petals around a quail's egg are a pure delight. And a velvety crab custard recalls the best bites of a buttery seaside sarnie but becomes slightly confused with a confetti of frozen pink grapefruit. The over-played dessertification of dishes continues with a perfectly cooked scallop weighed down by a sticky crown of sweet hazelnut crust.

The menu really hits the sweet spot with a dessert of alphonso mango, pistachio and lime in harmony with ice cream — paired perfectly with Kent's sparkling Chapel Down Grand Reserve. Fruit, ice cream and fizz: the sort of nostalgia-inducing seaside indulgences Brown excels at — pleasures that are best when kept simple. *Ten-course dinner tasting menu £125 per person; wine from £8 a glass. Sarah Barrell*



MOSS

📍 EDINBURGH • [MOSSDN.CO.UK](https://mossedn.co.uk)

You can tell chef Henry Dobson did a stint at Noma. His first solo restaurant, in Edinburgh's well-heeled Stockbridge, embraces New Nordic cuisine's local sourcing ethos; 90 products come directly from Dobson's family farm in Angus and everything else — wine and tea aside — originates from within Scotland. Foraging and fermentation are de rigueur.

Halibut, singed perfectly golden, is the star of the starters. Topped with a chargrilled tangle of sea truffle weed, it tastes of the sea, but infused with a complex, distinctly Japanese richness. No surprise there, as East Asian-inspired bases like soy and miso are made in-house, the latter from a base of barley,

which grows locally in abundance, rather than the traditional rice. In a nod to sustainability, pigeon is smoked over wood shavings left over from making the tables. Roe deer is served a rose-pink medium rare with slabs of intricate pommes Anna and a Douglas fir sauce; this really is an ecosystem on a plate.

There's only one dessert option: a Japanese-inspired chiffon cake that's surprisingly light, with cloud-like chantilly cream and the satisfying crack of a salty-sweet topping that melts on the tongue. Epitomising Moss's philosophy, every element of the dish comes from within the Scottish border. *Three courses for two people around £170 with wine. Suzy Pope*



PIP

📍 MANCHESTER • [TREEHOUSEHOTELS.COM](https://treehousehotels.com)

At Mary-Ellen McTague's latest undertaking in Manchester, the award-winning, Bury-born chef has compiled a menu of fiercely Lancastrian dishes — hotpots, butter pies and the like — with just the hint of a twist.

Take the Lancashire hotpot, the menu's obvious star. I'm advised to add oyster ketchup and mash the dish together, before taking a mouthful with pickled red cabbage. The lamb has been slow-cooked to perfection. But the finished effect is, well, a pretty straightforward Lancashire hotpot. Hearty but not spectacular.

Perhaps that's the point of Pip. It's the hotel restaurant of the family-orientated Treehouse

chain, and it's comfort food at a comfortable price, served all day in a playful room.

There's plenty of interest around the margins of the menu, though. From the snacks list, the chunky split pea chips are fun; stacked next to a gooey mushroom ketchup, they're like moreish onion rings. From the starters, the hibiscus-glazed beets are paired with tangy blood orange and hazelnut, all begging to be rolled up inside the bitter radicchio leaves.

The standout is the treacle tart. Stickily sweet yet airily light and garnished with a remarkable warm earl grey broth. *Three courses £35; wine from £6.50 a glass. Ben East*



TATAR BUNAR

📍 LONDON • [INSTAGRAM.COM/TATARBUNAR.LONDON](https://instagram.com/tatarbunar.london)

I may be just off London's busy Old Street but I could be in a cabin in an Eastern European forest. There are wooden beams and shelves made from reclaimed Carpathian wood, while among the tables are a couple of very convincing trees. The warm lighting gives the impression of a permanent sunset.

Tatar Bunar was conceived by two Ukrainian restaurateurs: Kyiv-based Alex Cooper, currently unable to leave the country due to the ongoing war, and Anna Andriienko, who oversees the day-to-day running of this love letter to their homeland.

The menu, developed by the pair and head chef Kate Tkachuk, draws from all corners

of Ukraine. There are potato and mushroom varenyky (dumplings), fried to a deep golden-brown, the pastry crisp and the filling smooth, but in need of a little more mushroom flavour. The plachinda with bryndza is a delicate and delicious flatbread stuffed with white cheese that pairs perfectly with the accompanying tomato chutney and sour cream.

The grilled cod is succulent and flaky, the creamy sauce flavoured with a judiciously sparse sprinkling of dill. The winner, though, is the pickled cherry tomatoes, whose sweet-sour juices spill out over another dollop of sour cream. *Sharing plates for two around £100; wine from £10 a glass. Nicola Trup*



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EAT & STAY

KYND, HAMPTON MANOR

📍 SOLIHULL • [HAMPTONMANOR.COM](https://hamptonmanor.com)

THIS COUNTRY HOUSE HOTEL'S NEW RESTAURANT SHOWCASES THE BEST OF THE SEASON

It's hard to go wrong with chips and dips — at least at Kynd, where the 'artichoke crisps, artichoke harissa' is one of the best things I've eaten in ages. The 'crisps' — crunchy fried artichoke petals — arrive wedged into a luxurious mound of creamed artichoke, drizzled with herb oil and smoky harissa. I could easily devour the entire portion my friend and I have ordered to share.

This dish is indicative of what chef director David Taylor and head chef Alex Hardy are going for at their new restaurant at Hampton Manor, outside Solihull. They take a low-waste, farm-to-table approach and honour the produce they use — a mushroom croquette starter is another dish that, like the artichoke crisps, celebrates a hero ingredient, this time by rolling it in breadcrumbs to create

a perfectly crunchy umami bomb. Many of the vegetables and herbs come from the lovely kitchen garden outside the Manor's other restaurant, Michelin-starred Grace & Savour.

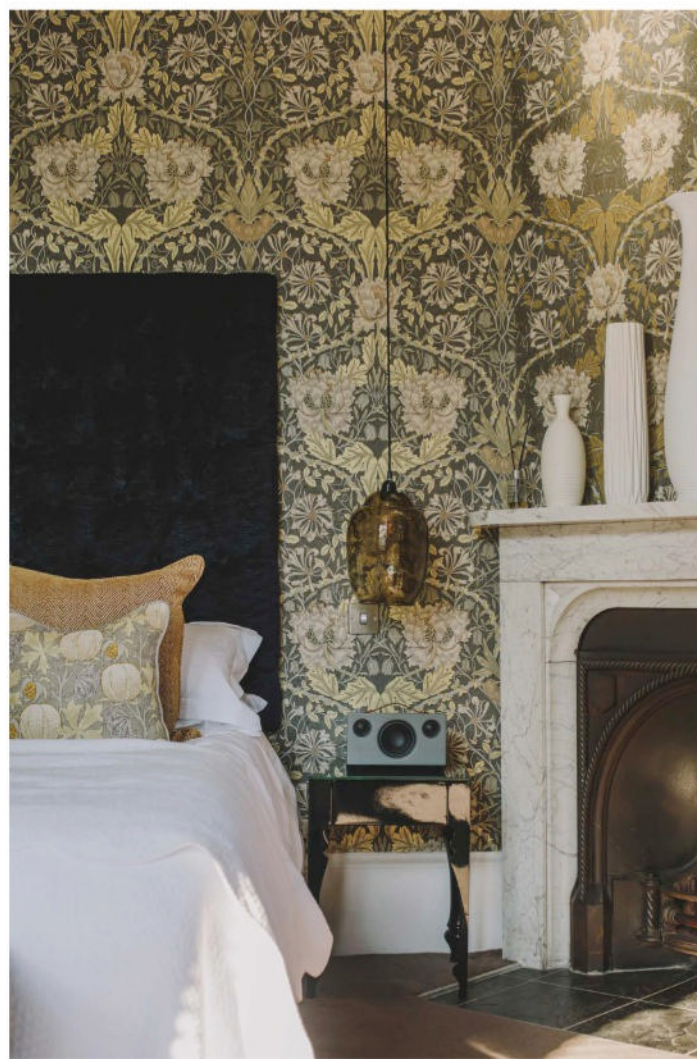
The menu at the more casual Kynd changes seasonally, but dishes from the wood-fired oven are always plentiful. On our visit, these include a side of potato fondant, all beautiful layers of buttery spud. My main of Cornish skate wing, meanwhile, flakes away in satisfying slivers, the creamy fish-bone sauce studded with wild garlic capers and full of flavour.

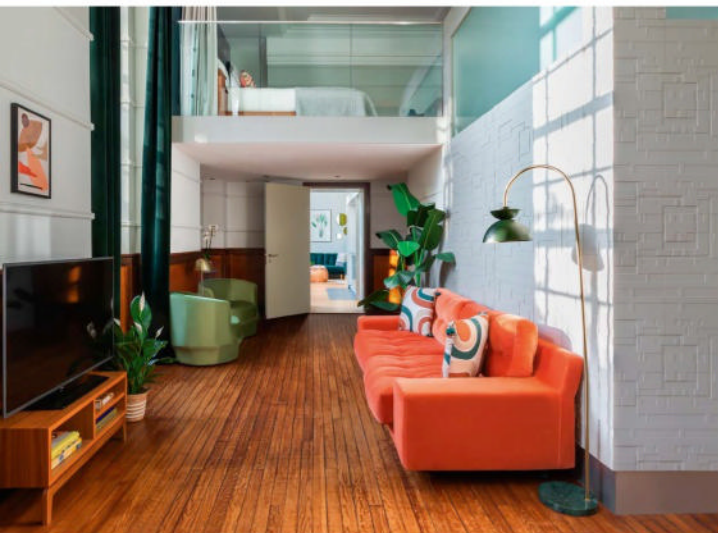
Both skate and potato are a touch over-seasoned for my palate, but dessert comes with a perfectly judged sprinkling of sea salt. It sets off the rich quenelle of chocolate marquise, which is served on thick creme fraiche with craggy shards of caramelised

chocolate, the flavour of which is reminiscent of a Daim bar — no bad thing in my book.

After all that — and having partaken in a welcome slice of cake and a wine-tasting that afternoon — we're stuffed, so we head to the hotel bar for a board game and a herbal tea. Then it's back to the bedroom — one of 15 in the main house — which is vast, with tastefully classic decor livened up by pops of fuchsia. The bathroom, meanwhile, has a capacious rolltop bath I'm far too full to consider using.

Breakfast comes with the most deliciously soft and sweet cinnamon bun, which is so good that I pop to the on-site bakery to buy another to take home, as well as a sourdough loaf for good measure. My kind of souvenirs. *Three-course dinner £85 per person; wine from £9 a glass. Doubles from £210, room only. Nicola Trup*





DA TERRA, TOWN HALL HOTEL

📍 LONDON • DATERRA.CO.UK TOWNHALLHOTEL.COM

Next to a figurine of Raphael the Ninja Turtle, Rafael Cagali the chef is preparing a fish stew inspired by his childhood. His open-plan kitchen at Da Terra, a two-Michelin-starred restaurant in Bethnal Green's opulent Town Hall Hotel, is the aesthetic love child of a townhouse and a trendy private members' club; decked out with white tablecloths, wooden animals from Brazil and all four Ninja Turtles.

Here the São Paulo native pays homage to his Brazilian-Italian roots with a meticulously prepared eight-course tasting menu. The stew in question, moqueca, is a showstopping sauce of coconut milk and bell pepper, served with aged turbot and farofa (made with toasted cassava flour). It's nutty and zesty, and the accompanying fiery cumari peppers cut through the starch beautifully.

The A4 wagyu sirloin — aged on site and served with lobster rice and hen of the woods mushrooms — is another umami-packed highlight. As for the desserts, the Romeo and Juliette is a lighter-than-air guava and goat's cheese flan. The baba au rhum, meanwhile, is sweet and salty, made with potent cachaça and finished with pistachio ice cream and N25 Reserve caviar.

After dinner, we head to our suite, which is modern and spacious with Edwardian and art deco flourishes. There's a kitchen and a lounge with a record player and marshmallow-soft sofas. In the morning, the floor-to-ceiling windows let in plenty of light and offer a glimpse into the daily lives of Bethnal Greeners below. *Tasting menu £245 per person, wine pairing £150. Doubles from £245, room only. Farida Zeynalova*

HARRY'S, THE GALLIVANT

📍 CAMBER SANDS, EAST SUSSEX • THEGALLIVANT.CO.UK

A destination restaurant backed by gorse-scented dunes, Harry's blends urban buzz with a whimsical beach aesthetic. Hanging plants deck the clapboard terrace and conservatory-style restaurant, while vintage bathing costumes and postcards hang in frames in the lounge bar.

The local team — led by owners Harry and Sigrid Cragoe and chef Matthew Harris — has created a warm and laid-back place. Wellies and beach towels can be borrowed, and staff will pack cocktails for a sandy sundowner on beautiful Camber Sands beach, just across the road.

These sands drift just across into Kent, at the heart of England's wine country, and complimentary glasses are served daily at 5pm. Harry's wine list makes the most of local offerings, showcasing the likes of Gusbourne Estate and Nyetimber.

A glass of Simpsons Chalklands Classic Cuvee is perfect with buttery Maldon oysters and local asparagus with poached egg, almond crumb and anchovy hollandaise. Fish of the day is braised sea bream in a rich bouillabaisse with a sizeable scoop of aioli. Scallion champ and buttery spring greens are standout sides.

Garden Rooms are set in a chic terrace adjacent to the main building and come with pretty patios and free-standing tubs. Breakfast has a camping vibe, with a coffee thermos and do-it-yourself egg boiler as well as a selection of breads and spreads. House-made granola and yoghurt, local cheese, salmon or charcuterie and a ginger shot are brought to your table. For seaside fun delivered with cosmopolitan flair, few have it down like Harry's. *Mains around £30; wine from £7.50 a glass. Doubles from £245, B&B. Sarah Barrell* 🍷



IMAGES: ALEX TEUSCHER; IANA IANAKIEVA; CARLA BARBER

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CYPRUS

HOW I GOT THE SHOT



KAROLINA WIERCIGROCH DISCUSSES SHOOTING A FAMILY MEAL IN WESTERN CYPRUS FOR OUR SUMMER 2024 ISSUE

Can you tell us about this scene?

This image is part of a Breaking Bread feature, which I shot in the sleepy village of Fyti in western Cyprus. We spent the morning chopping, sautéing and waiting for the goat kleftiko to roast in the outdoor clay oven. Then, we sat down for lunch with our hosts, Flora and Andreas Karpı, and their family and friends.

Did this shot require any specific settings?

The light in Flora and Andreas's kitchen was limited and I didn't want to interfere with the intimate feel of a family gathering by using a flash. So I opened the French door, letting in as much natural light as possible and shot with a fast prime lens (Nikkor 50mm f/1.4). This compensated for low light with a wide aperture, which I set to f/2.8. People were constantly moving, so I kept the shutter speed at 1/125 of a second and bumped up the ISO to 800.

Were you faced with any challenges?

There wasn't much room for me to move around the table, so I started with some test shots to identify the best angle before asking everyone to sit down. This proved to be another challenge; with so many excited, hungry guests, there was an endless movement of people running to get another plate, wine bottle or sauce, or to make a phone call. But that was a good sign, too; we'd already spent the entire morning together, so people were no longer shy and acted naturally.


How did you ensure the shot wasn't too busy?

I was going for a candid effect that could encapsulate the wholesome, chaotic energy of a family get-together. The scene was loud and full of lovingly prepared dishes. That said, using a low aperture setting let me blur the foreground, which would otherwise have been too busy. Having Andreas standing up in the middle of the frame naturally leads the viewer to the centre of the image, following a diagonal line of plates, pots and wine glasses. Additionally, I went for a wider crop, including some negative space in the top left corner for balance. My first instinct was to close the cupboard door in the top right corner, but I decided I liked that playful element.



View the full shoot and interview online at

nationalgeographic.com/travel

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ON THE TABLE

What we've been enjoying in the world of food and travel

I'VE BEEN CHECKING OUT...

The Lygon Arms, a historic Cotswolds former coaching inn with elegantly trad rooms and dining by James Martin (don't miss Wellington Weekends for the classic dish with all the trimmings). It also offers an array of activities — butter churning, anyone? *Nicola Trup, editor*

I'VE BEEN TASTING...

Hoop Chips, crisps made from sustainably grown Costa Rican plantain. Flavours include garlic, lemon pepper and cinnamon — and 23p from each pack goes towards supporting youth basketball clubs in London. *Sarah Barrell, senior editor*



I'VE BEEN TUCKING INTO...

BOXTAPAS!, a selection of delicious tapas ingredients sourced from small producers across Spain and delivered to your door. There are five boxes — classic, chorizo, seafood, vegetarian and gourmet — and products include green olive tapenade, Iberico pâté and Galician mussels in escabeche sauce. *Farida Zeynalova, associate editor*

I'VE BEEN DISCOVERING...

Pequi, a Brazilian fruit typically served with rice and chicken, during a stay at Pousada Trijunção hotel, in the Cerrado area. Its unique flavour — a cross between citrus and cheese — tends to be one you either love or loathe. *Angela Locatelli, contributing editor*

THREE TO TRY

Unusual afternoon teas

1 Jane Austen, Bath

Mark 250 years since the novelist's birth at The Pump Room Restaurant with sweet and savoury selections and a Darcy cocktail of Earl Grey and spiced rum.

2 Floating, Edinburgh

Teas and sandwiches amid the art deco-style interiors of the Fingal Hotel, set in a ship moored on Leith's waterfront.

3 High fashion, London

Inspired by *The Devil Wears Prada*, The Coral Room's Runway Afternoon Tea (below) features treats with names like 'lumpy blue sweater' and 'a single cube of cheese'.



What chef-led supper club are you a fan of?

RAMBUTAN & COUSINS, a monthly collab between London Sri Lankan restaurant Rambutan and guest chefs, from Ixta Belfrage to Denai Moore. They create unique, delicious fusion menus. *NT*

CUBITT HOUSE EATS WITH, which brings the likes of Asma Khan and Josh Katz to Cubitt House's London pubs. Alongside chef director Ben Tish, they make dishes inspired by their own cookbooks. *FZ*

HONEY & CO DAILY'S SUPPER CLUBS, which recently welcomed back Moroccan-Jewish chef Omer Ido. Chermoula roasted veg, slow-cooked lamb and fragrant mimouna pastries were all highlights. *SB*

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