



**Nigel
Slater**
Greenfeast

autumn, winter

GREENFEAST

AUTUMN, WINTER

Nigel Slater

Photography by
Jonathan Lovekin

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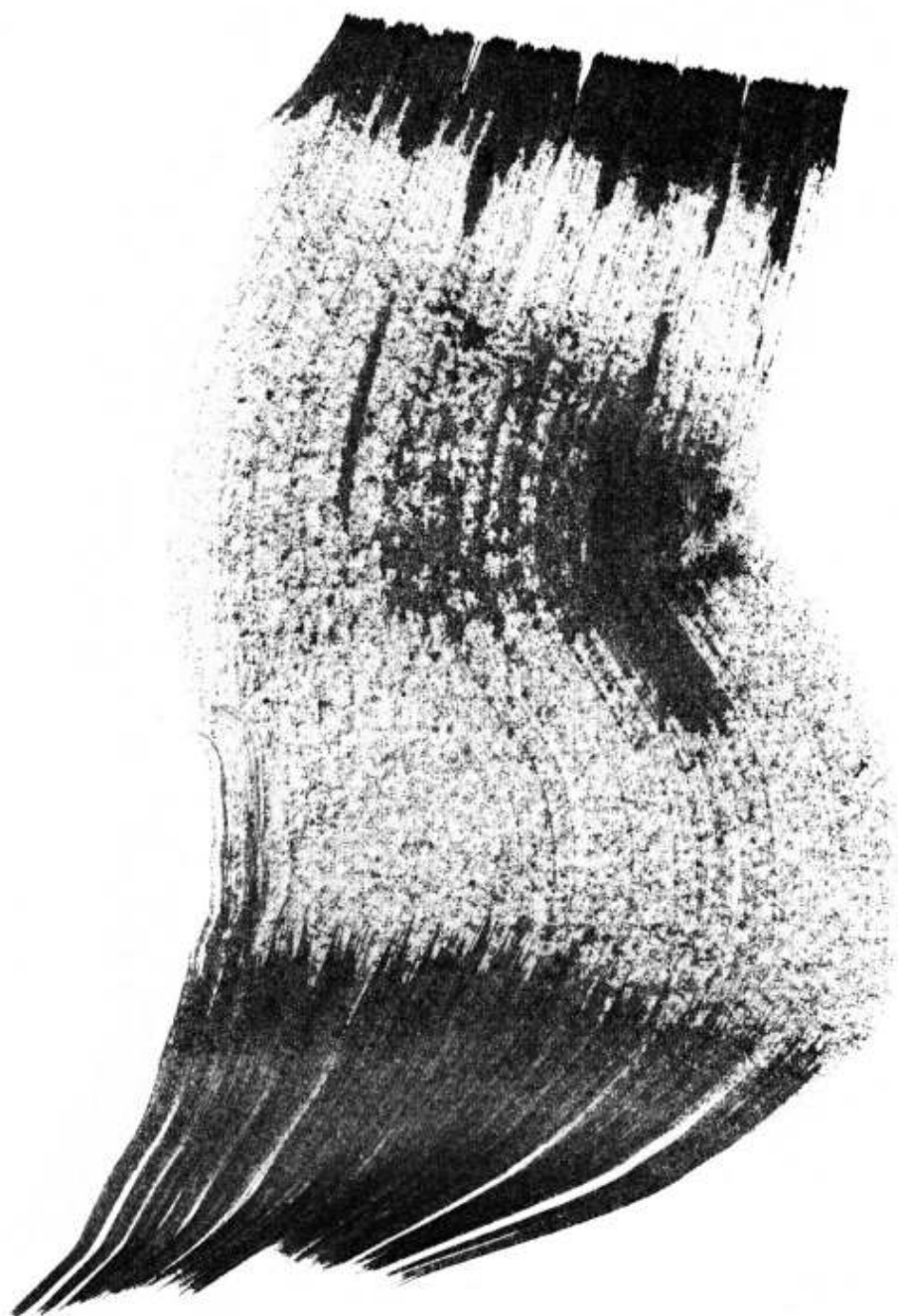
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For James



Tom Kemp

Tom Kemp has had a couple of careers. He trained formally as a theoretical computer scientist and followed a sequence of post-doctoral research and programming posts. In parallel, he was learning to be an artist by studying the writings of ancient manuscripts, not their content but how they were made. In particular, he worked out the details of a Roman signwriting technique which has informed all his brushwork, both readable and abstract. This calligraphic training led to a deeper pursuit of writing in general and artworks in many media, including graffiti and digital work. Along the way he learned to make porcelain vessels on a potter's wheel, an activity he describes as 'calligraphy in 3D', and these now form the large surfaces on which he continues to write.

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Contents

Cover

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Tom Kemp](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Winter Basics](#)

[A BROWN VEGETABLE STOCK](#)

[OATS, DRIED MULBERRIES, DATE SYRUP](#)

[In a Pan](#)

ARTICHOKES, BEANS, GREEN OLIVES

AUBERGINES, GINGER, TAMARIND

BRUSSELS SPROUTS, BROWN RICE, MISO

BURRATA, BEANS, TOMATOES

BUTTERNUT, BREADCRUMBS, CURRY POWDER

BUTTERNUT, FETA, EGGS

EGGS, EDAMAME, BEAN SPROUTS

FENNEL, PEAS, HALLOUMI

JERUSALEM ARTICHOKES, PISTACHIOS, GRAPES

MUSHROOMS, HUMMUS, HERBS

PARSLEY, PARMESAN, EGGS

PUMPKIN, ONIONS, ROSEMARY

RAINBOW CHARD, EGG, NOODLES

TOFU, RADISH, PONZU

On Toast

BEETROOT, APPLE, GOAT'S CURD

CRUMPETS, CREAM CHEESE, SPINACH

EGGS, SPINACH, BREAD

LEEKs, CAERPHILLY, MUSTARD

MUSHROOMS, BLUE CHEESE, TOASTING MUFFINS

NAAN, MOZZARELLA, TOMATOES

In the Oven

ARTICHOKES, WINTER ROOTS, SMOKED SALT

BRUSSELS SPROUTS, SMOKED MOZZARELLA, DILL

BUTTER BEANS, PEPPERS, AUBERGINES

CABBAGE, BERBERE SPICE, CRUMBS

CARROTS, SPICES, PANEER

CAULIFLOWER, ONIONS, BAY

CHEDDAR, TARRAGON, EGGS

CHEESE, THYME, GRAPES

CHICKPEAS, RADICCHIO, BUTTER BEANS

FENNEL, CREAM, PINE KERNELS

LENTILS, SWEET POTATO, TOMATOES

MUSHROOMS, CHICKPEAS, TAHINI

ONIONS, TALEGGIO, CREAM

PARSNIPS, SHALLOTS, GOAT'S CURD

PARSNIPS, SMOKED GARLIC, FETA

POTATOES, BRUSSELS SPROUTS

POTATOES, SWEET POTATOES, CREAM

POTATOES, TAHINI, THYME

POTATOES, TOMATOES, HORSERADISH

PUMPKIN, CHICKPEAS, ROSEMARY

PUMPKIN, COUSCOUS, DATE SYRUP

PUMPKIN, MUSTARD, CREAM

SWEET POTATO, JALAPEÑOS, BEANS

SWEET POTATOES, TOMATOES

On a Plate

APPLES, BLUE CHEESE, WALNUTS

BEETROOT, BLOOD ORANGE, WATERCRESS

MUSHROOMS, ORANGE, BREADCRUMBS

RED CABBAGE, CARROTS, SMOKED ALMONDS

With a Crust

FILO PASTRY, CHEESE, GREENS

LEEEKS, PARSNIPS, PASTRY

LEEEKS, TOMATO, PECORINO

SHALLOTS, APPLES, PARMESAN

SWEDE, MUSHROOM, GRUYÈRE, THYME

SWEET POTATO, PUFF PASTRY

With a Ladle

BEETROOT, LENTILS, GARAM MASALA

BEETROOT, SAUERKRAUT, DILL

BLACK-EYED BEANS, ROSEMARY, KALE

BRUSSELS TOPS, BLUE CHEESE

CELERIAC, HORSERADISH, PUMPERNICKEL

CHEDDAR, CIDER, MUSTARD

FENNEL, CUCUMBER, MINT

MUSHROOMS, BUTTERNUT, SOURED CREAM

NOODLES, LENTILS, SOURED CREAM

ORZO, SMOKED MOZZARELLA, THYME

TAHINI, SESAME, BUTTERNUT

On the Hob

AUBERGINE, TOMATO, COCONUT MILK

CARROTS, RICE, CORIANDER

FREGOLA, GREENS, PECORINO

GNOCCHI, PEAS, EGG YOLK

HARICOT BEANS, RICE, ONIONS

LENTILS, SWEDE, PAPRIKA

MILK, MUSHROOMS, RICE

MOGRABIA, TOMATOES, LABNEH

MUSHROOMS, SPINACH, RICE

ORECCHIETTE, CAULIFLOWER, CHEESE

PARSNIPS, CASHEWS, SPICES

PEARL BARLEY, KALE, GOAT'S CHEESE

POLENTA, GARLIC, MUSHROOMS

POLENTA, THYME, TALEGGIO

RICE, BROCCOLI, PAK CHOI

RICE, LEMON, LIME

SWEET POTATO, COCONUT MILK, CASHEWS

TAGLIATELLE, DILL, MUSHROOMS

TOMATO, CHILLIES, UDON

Pudding

APPLES, CINNAMON, PUFF PASTRY

APPLES, GINGER CAKE, CUSTARD

APPLES, OATS, CHOCOLATE

APPLES, PEARS, RYE

BANANAS, BUTTER, PUFF PASTRY

CHOCOLATE, DRIED FRUIT, PISTACHIOS

CHOCOLATE, DULCE DE LECHE, CANTUCCI

CHOCOLATE, ORANGE ZEST, CANDIED PEEL

DAMSON, ALMOND, SUNFLOWER SEEDS

[GINGER CAKE, CARDAMOM, MAPLE SYRUP](#)

[HAZELNUTS, BLOOD ORANGES, RICOTTA](#)

[ICE CREAM, CHOCOLATE, SHERRY](#)

[CRANBERRY, MINCEMEAT, MERINGUE](#)

[PAPAYA, PASSION FRUIT, MINT](#)

[PEARS, RED WINE, PECORINO](#)

[PUDDING RICE, ROSEWATER, APRICOTS](#)

[SHERRY, BLOOD ORANGES, CREAM](#)

[RICE, MILK, FIG JAM](#)

[Index](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

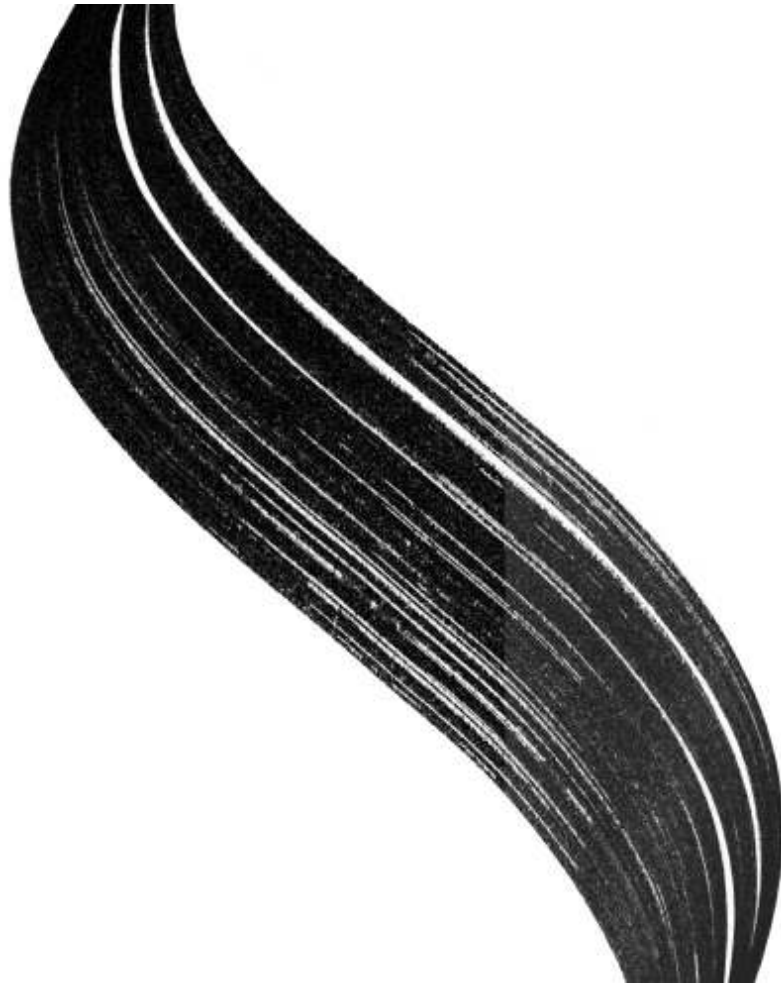
[A note on the brushstrokes](#)

[A note on the type](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Also by Nigel Slater](#)

[About the Publisher](#)



[INTRODUCTION](#)

Dinner is different in winter. The change starts late on a summer's evening, when you first notice the soft, familiar scent of distant woodsmoke in the sudden chill of the evening air. Then, a day or two later, a damp, mushroomy mist hovers over the gardens and parks. Later, you notice the leaves have turned silently from yellow ochre to walnut. Autumn is here once again. You may sigh, rejoice or open a bottle. For many, this is the end of their year. For me, this is when it starts, when warmth, and bonhomie come to the fore.

Energy returns.

With the change of weather, supper takes on a more significant role. We are suddenly hungry. Once the nights draw in, I am no longer satisfied by plates of milky burrata and slices of sweet, apricot-fleshed melon. No more am I

content with a bowl of couscous with peaches, soft cheese and herbs for dinner. What I crave now is food that is both cosseting and warming, substantial and deeply satisfying. Food that nourishes but also sets me up for going back out in the cold and wet. And yet, I still find my diet is heavily plant-based with less emphasis on meat. It is simply the way it has progressed over the years and shows little sign of abating.

At the start of the longest half of the year, our appetite is pricked by the sudden drop in temperature, and as evenings get longer, we have the opportunity to spend a little more time in the kitchen. To mash beans into buttery clouds. Simmer vegetable stews to serve with bowls of couscous. To bring dishes of sweet potato to melting tenderness in spiced cream. And of course, the pasta jar comes out again.

My cold weather eating is more substantial than the food I eat for the rest of the year. Dinner becomes about one main dish rather than several lighter ones, and the focus shifts towards keeping warm. On returning home I will now happily spend an hour cooking. Maybe a little longer.

The oven gets more use at this time of year, the grill and griddle probably less. More food will come to the table in deep casseroles and pie dishes. I dig out my capacious ladle for a creamed celeriac soup as soft as velvet. The temperature of the plates and bowls will change. We want to hold things that warm our hands, a sign of the happiness to come.

There will be carbs. They protect and energise us. They bring balm to our jagged nerves. (Winter is nature's way of making us eat carbohydrates.) Crusts – of pastry, breadcrumbs and crumble – add substance; potatoes fill and satisfy and there is once again a huge sourdough loaf on the table. Rice and noodles are no longer a side dish, and now become the heart and soul of dinner.

My autumn and winter cooking is every bit as plant-based as the food I make in the summer; it just has a bit more heft to it. Shallow bowls of rice cooked with milk and thyme in the style of a risotto. A verdant, filling soup of Brussels sprouts and blue cheese. A saffron-coloured stew of sour cream, herbs and noodles. Translucent fritters in a pool of melted cheese. Golden mushrooms astride a cloud of soft, yellow polenta. There is a tangle of

noodles and tomato, peppery with chilli; roast parsnips and baked pumpkin; a wide earthenware dish of sweet potatoes and lentils glowing like a lantern, a herb-freckled crumble of leeks and tomato or swedes and thyme in a pastry crust and a tarte Tatin of soft golden shallots and autumn apples. It is all here, between these pumpkin-coloured covers.

This is also the season for ‘something on toast’. By toast I mean not only bread cut thick and rough-edged, but toasted bagels and crumpets, muffins and naan. Any soft dough that will crisp under the grill and will support a cargo of vegetables or is happy to be slathered with a thick wave of crème fraîche or hummus, roast vegetables or perhaps cheese to melt and bubble.

And, of course, there must be pudding. An early autumn crumble of damsons and almonds. Chocolate puddings (you really must make the ones with dulce de leche). Ginger cake with a cardamom cream and a custard pudding set with cake and apples. There will be nut-encrusted shortbreads with blood orange and baked apples with crisp crumbs and cranberries. I expect syllabubs and baked pears on the table, pastries laden with a golden dice of apples and scones pebble-dashed with nibs of dark chocolate.

I probably eat more puddings during the cold months, but mainly at the weekend. The main course recipes in this book are predominantly for two; the puddings, though, are all for four or more. You can’t really make a tart for two or a tiny batch of scones. The recipes are made for sharing with friends and family. That said, most of them are rather fine eaten the following day. Especially those little chocolate puddings.

A note on volume 1. *Greenfeast: spring, summer.*

Like all my books, the first volume of *Greenfeast* was written from and about my own kitchen. That it found itself welcomed by quite so many came as something of a pleasant surprise. I have lost count of the number of people who in the last few months have told me that this is the way they eat now, as an ‘almost vegetarian.’

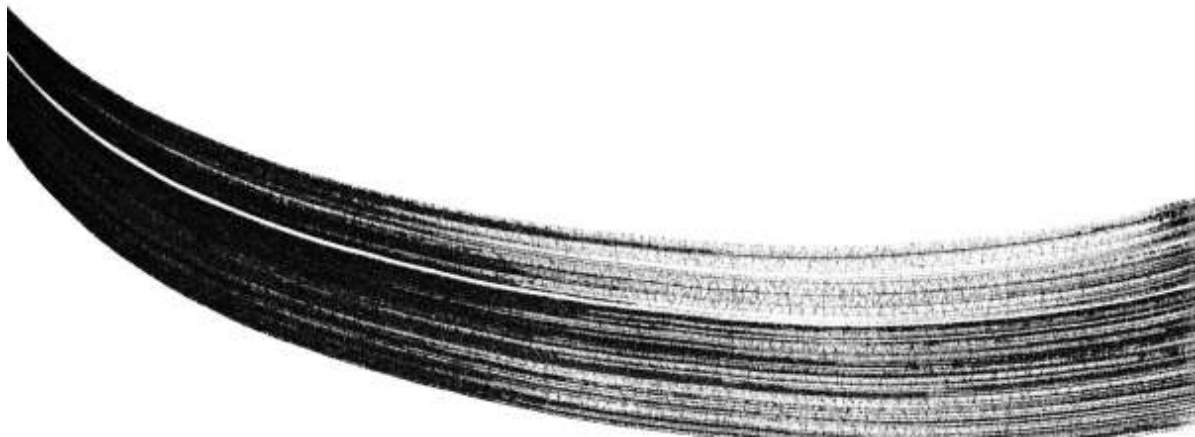
The idea that so many people’s everyday eating is going through such a change and that meat is no longer our first thought when working out what we want to eat, is heartening to say the least. Apparently I am not the only

person for whom meat is still looked forward to but as a once- or twice-a-week treat, not the knee-jerk star of every meal. I knew this was happening (you would have to live under a stone not to) but I genuinely hadn't realised how widely and quickly the change has come about.

Yes, vegan cooking and full-blown vegetarianism is on the rise, but there are far more people who seem to prefer a less rigid approach to their eating.

This makes sense on so many levels, but when all is said and eaten it is simply that the options for cooking without meat have never been more varied or delicious. There has never been a better time to celebrate the move towards a mostly plant-based diet.

WINTER BASICS



WINTER STOCK

A good vegetable stock is worth its weight in gold on a winter's day. As the nights draw in, we probably need a stock altogether deeper, richer and more ballsy than the delicate, vegetal liquids we might use in summer. Something that behaves more like a brown meat stock. Such a broth is immensely useful

in my kitchen as a base for the heartier non-meat recipes that form the backbone of my daily eating, but also as something restoring to drink as you might a cup of miso. The colour must be dark and glossy, the flavour deeply, mysteriously herbal with a hint of mushroom and there should be a roasted back note, the sort you find in a long-simmered meat stock.

As you proceed, the kitchen will fill with the smell of onions, celery and carrots, which you roast with miso paste, then remove from the oven and simmer for a good hour with thyme, bay and shiitake. You could slip in a sheet of kombu for an extra layer of depth if you like.

The broth will need straining and separating from its spent aromatics, its deep, almost mahogany liquor dripping slowly into a glass bowl. The liquor can be used immediately, or kept in the fridge, covered, for up to a week.

Such a stock is a bowl of pure treasure. You can drink it like broth, dipping thick hunks of bread or focaccia into it; you can use it as base for a soup, adding steamed cauliflower or shredded cabbage, parsley and croutons, or add noodles, skeins of udon or little pasta stars to twinkle in the dark, mushroomy depths. Whenever the word ‘stock’ appears in a recipe, use it neat or let it down with a little water to taste. And it will freeze too, though I suggest in small containers, so it defrosts quickly.

And when all is said and done, is there anything quite so restoring as coming home to a bowl of deeply layered, smoky stock, to bubble on the stove, to which you add pieces of hot toast, letting them slowly swell with the bosky, fungal, roasted flavours from the bowl.

WINTER PORRIDGE

A winter’s day should start well. A steaming bowl of something to see us on our way. I invariably choose porridge. An oat-based slop to satisfy and strengthen, to bolster and soothe, to see me through till I get where I’m going.

A sort of internal duffel coat. I doubt it will just be porridge of course, but porridge with bells and whistles: a trickle of treacle, a pool of crème fraîche, ribbons of maple syrup or a puddle of yoghurt. There may be golden sultanas

and dried mulberries, pistachios or toasted almonds and perhaps some baked figs or slices of banana.

Porridge doesn't necessarily mean oats. You could use rye grain or barley and milk or water as you wish. There might be salt or sugar, cinnamon or ground cardamom or toasted pumpkin seeds. If I remember, there will be stewed fruit too: apples perhaps, or dried apricots cooked with sugar or honey.

Porridge is never just porridge in my house. It is a winter staple, one of the building blocks of the season and something I could never think of being without.



A BROWN VEGETABLE STOCK

Deep flavours. A herbal, umami-rich stock for winter cooking.

Set the oven at 180°C/Gas 4. Peel and roughly

Makes about 2 litres

onions, medium 2

chop the onions, then place in a roasting tin

carrots 250g

together with the skins. Similarly chop the carrots

celery 2 sticks

and celery sticks, then mix with the onions and the

garlic a small, whole head

head of garlic, separated into cloves.

light miso paste 3 tablespoons

Mix together the miso paste and 80ml of water,

water 80ml, plus 3 litres

then stir into the vegetables, coating them lightly.

dried shiitake mushrooms 50g

Bake for about an hour, tossing the vegetables

rosemary 5 sprigs

thyme 10 sprigs

once or twice during cooking, until everything is

bay leaves 3

brown, fragrant and toasty.

black peppercorns 12

Transfer the roasted vegetables and aromatics to

dried kombu 10g

a deep saucepan, add the shiitake, rosemary,

thyme, bay, peppercorns and the sheets of kombu,

then pour a little of the reserved water into the

roasting tin, scrape at the sticky, caramelised bits

stuck to the tin, then pour into the saucepan. Add

the remaining water. Bring to the boil, then lower

the heat and leave to simmer, partially covered

with a lid, for fifty minutes to an hour.

When you have a deep brown, richly coloured

broth, tip through a sieve into a heatproof bowl or

large jug and leave to cool. Refrigerate and use as

necessary.

- Keeps for up to one week in the fridge.



OATS, DRIED MULBERRIES, DATE SYRUP

The solace of porridge. The sweetness of dried fruits.

Put the oats and 400ml of water into a small

Serves 2

porridge oats 100g

saucepan and bring them to the boil. Add a good

dried mulberries 50g

pinch of salt and stir the oats continuously for four

golden sultanas 75g

or five minutes with a wooden spoon until the

cream or crème fraîche 4

porridge is thick and creamy.

tablespoons

Divide between two bowls, then add the dried

date syrup 2 tablespoons

mulberries and golden sultanas. Add spoonfuls of

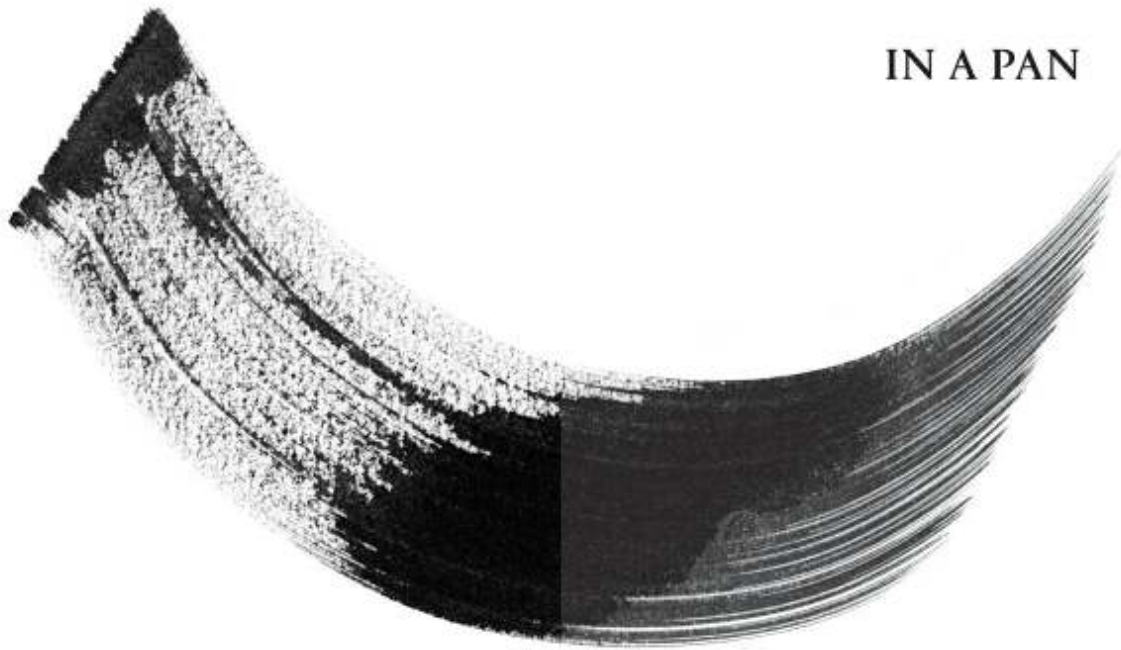
crème fraîche, then trickle over the date syrup.

- I often use dried apricots in place of the

mulberries, but cranberries and dried cherries are

good alternatives.

- The sweetness of the date syrup can be balanced by a spoon or two of stewed tart apples.



On a winter's evening, I warm butter and olive oil in a shallow-sided, cast-iron pan, turn the heat down low and use it to fry thin slices of potato, Jerusalem artichoke or fennel. Vegetables that will crisp or soften as you wish, and to which I can add other ingredients at will – sweet black grapes and whole parsley leaves to the crisp artichokes; peas and salty cheese to the softened fennel. I do the same with slices of pumpkin or butternut squash, then introduce feta or breadcrumbs or perhaps a fried egg whose yolk will double as an impromptu sauce.

A heavy frying pan in which you can leave things to cook at a moderate temperature is worth its weight in gold. It is the gift I would give to a kid leaving home. The possibilities are endless. Mushrooms, sliced and sautéed with herbs to pile on a mound of silken hummus; beans whose outsides slowly crisp in olive oil and are then tossed with tomatoes and a wobbly egg of burrata; Brussels sprouts fried with miso paste to a deep walnut brown,

then forked through sticky brown rice. They all give a substantial green and deeply savoury supper. The list is endless.

The success often lies in the pan itself. A pitted or wobbly-based pan will produce uneven results. Sometimes you need a thin-bottomed pan in which to flash-fry, other times a pan as heavy as possible that will hold the heat and which can be left to do its task while you get on with other elements of dinner. Choose your weapon.

It is worth finding a suitable lid. Especially if you are cooking vegetables that need to be brought gently to tenderness before a final crisping, such as potatoes, parsnips and carrots. The sort of heavyweight pans I find so useful for slow winter cooking often come without a lid, so it is not a bad idea to find one that fits before you leave the shop.

I am very fond of my old iron sauté pans, but they do need a bit of care when you first get them home. A good oiling with linseed oil, a long, slow bake in the oven and a careful dry before putting them away will give them a chance to develop a patina, a naturally non-stick layer that will, unlike a commercial non-stick finish, see you through a lifetime of suppers.



ARTICHOKES, BEANS, GREEN OLIVES

Crisp beans and fried artichokes. Dinner from the deli.

Put the olives into the jug of a blender, then add

Serves 2

green olives, stoned 200g

the olive oil, basil leaves, lemon juice, parsley

olive oil 100ml

leaves and black garlic. Reduce to a thick purée.

basil 20 leaves

Warm the olive oil in a shallow pan that doesn't

lemon juice 75ml

stick, drain the beans and add them to the pan, then

parsley leaves from a small

let them cook over a moderate heat, turning

bunch

occasionally, until they are lightly crisp.

black garlic 2 cloves

olive oil, for frying 2

Put the polenta on a large plate. Break the eggs

tablespoons

into a shallow dish and mix the yolks and whites

haricot beans 1 × 400g can

together lightly with a fork. If the artichokes are

fine ground polenta 6

whole, then slice them in half. Roll each half in the

tablespoons

beaten egg, then place in the polenta and turn over,

eggs 2

artichokes in oil 350g

pressing down firmly to coat evenly.

groundnut oil, for deep frying

Heat the groundnut oil, add the artichokes and

fry till golden and crisp. Lift each from the oil and

drain briefly on kitchen paper before dividing

between two plates. Serve with the crisp beans and

the olive paste and, if you wish, a wedge of lemon.

- Make a black olive paste if you prefer, using

stoned black olives. I would also be tempted to add

a pinch of dried chilli flakes when you blend the

ingredients.

- You can use breadcrumbs instead of polenta.

Sieve fresh dry crumbs on to a plate and roll the artichokes in them after coating in egg.



AUBERGINES, GINGER, TAMARIND

Hot, sweet, sour.

Put the lime juice into a mixing bowl. Peel and

Serves 2

lime juice 100ml (about 2

grate the ginger, stirring the resulting paste into the
limes)

lime juice. Pour in the fish sauce, then stir in the
ginger 30g

palm sugar until dissolved.

fish sauce 3 teaspoons

Finely chop the red and green chillies, removing

palm sugar 4 teaspoons

the seeds if you wish, then add them to the

hot red chilli 1

marinade with the tamarind paste and groundnut

hot green chilli 1

tamarind paste 4 teaspoons

oil, combining the ingredients thoroughly.

groundnut oil 2 tablespoons

Cut the aubergines in half lengthways, then into
aubergines 300g

wedges as you might a melon. Now cut each
wedge in half. Put the aubergines into the

For the apple yoghurt:

mint leaves 12

marinade, turn to coat and set aside for a good half
a small apple

hour. During this time they will soften a little.

white wine vinegar 2

Make the apple yoghurt: finely chop the mint
tablespoons

leaves and put them in a small mixing bowl. Grate
natural yoghurt 200ml

the apple into the bowl, it can be as coarse or as
fine as you wish, then stir in the white wine
vinegar and yoghurt, cover and set aside.

To cook the aubergines, heat a cast-iron griddle
(and switch on the extractor). Place the aubergines
on the griddle and leave to brown on the underside.

Turn, loosening them from the griddle with a palette knife, and brown the other side. Keep the heat low to moderate, and make sure they are cooked right through – they must be fully tender. Serve the aubergines, hot from the griddle, with the apple yoghurt sauce.

- Cut the aubergines in slices or wedges, as the fancy takes you. There will, I assure you, be much smoke, so switch on the extractor or open a



window. Better still, cook them outside on the barbecue. Arm yourself with a palette knife to gently prise them from the bars of the griddle. I like to keep the heat no hotter than medium to give the aubergine time to cook through to the middle, a process you can speed up by covering the

aubergines with an upturned metal bowl (or a lid, if your griddle has one). If you prefer, rather than the sour apple dressing, make a dressing of olive oil, lime juice and coriander leaves.

- A twist of noodles, tossed with the merest splash of sesame oil, could be a suitable accompaniment here, as would long-grain rice, steamed and seasoned with black pepper and sesame seeds.



BRUSSELS SPROUTS, BROWN RICE, MISO

The savour of miso. The homeliness of brown rice.

Put the rice in a bowl, cover with warm water, then

Serves 2–3

brown sushi rice 190g

run your fingers through the grains. Drain, repeat,

Brussels sprouts 750g

then tip into a saucepan, cover with 5cm of cold

groundnut oil 2 tablespoons

water and set aside for half an hour.

light miso paste 1 tablespoon

Wash and trim the sprouts, then cut each in half.

Japanese pickles (tsukemono)

Bring the soaked rice to the boil in its soaking

2 tablespoons

water, add half a teaspoon of salt, cover and lower

the heat so the water simmers. Leave for thirty

minutes or until the rice is approaching tenderness.

Remove the pan from the heat and leave to rest for

ten minutes before removing the lid.

Warm the oil in a shallow pan. Toss the sprouts with the miso paste, then transfer to the hot oil, moving them round the pan as they become crisp and pale golden brown.

Remove the lid from the rice, run a fork through the grains to separate them, then divide between two or three bowls. Spoon the miso sprouts into the rice and add some of the Japanese pickles.

- Fried in a little oil, the miso paste forms a fine crust on the outside of the sprouts. Serve them as an accompaniment if you wish, but I like them as the star of the show, tucked into a bowl of sticky rice and scattered with salty Japanese pickles. I serve this as it is, but also as a side dish for slices of cold roast pork and its crackling. This is sticky rice, my favourite, but you don't want it in lumps, so running the tines of a fork through the cooked grain is a good idea.



BURRATA, BEANS, TOMATOES

Milky snow-white cheese. Toasted beans. Peppery basil.

Flatten the garlic cloves with the blade of a kitchen

Serves 2

garlic 3 cloves

knife, then peel away the skins. Warm four

olive oil

tablespoons of olive oil in a shallow pan and add

cannellini beans 1 × 400g can

the garlic, letting it cook briefly over a moderate

cherry tomatoes 250g

heat. Drain the cannellini beans.

basil leaves a handful

Cut the tomatoes in half, pour a little more oil

burrata 2 × 250g balls

into the pan, then add the tomatoes and the drained

cannellini. Fry briefly, for four or five minutes,

until the beans are starting to crisp a little.

Tear the basil leaves and add to the beans,

stirring them in gently, until they start to wilt.