

# Best in class

**Marjorie Taylor** runs a cookery school with her daughter in Burgundy. Here she explains their cookery philosophy and offers three recipes

I have always loved feeding people and gathering others around the table. Although I come from a large family, where big holiday gatherings were a normal part of growing up, the food prepared was never really the focus. I certainly didn't come from a long line of great cooks, and so I spent many years teaching myself. I've always been hugely inspired by the writings of Julia Child, M. F. K. Fisher, Elizabeth David, Madeleine Kamman, and Alice Waters, and essentially taught myself to cook following many of their recipes.

I admired their passion and the way they described how to cook in detail, using the techniques required to prepare each recipe by hand. Of course, these women all happened to be Francophiles, and I'm sure it's not by accident that I've always felt connected to French food in the same way that Kendall has been drawn toward France.

One of my very favourite cookbooks is *Chez Panisse Cooking* by Paul Bertolli and Alice Waters. I have a very well-worn copy that I continue to read to this day. I especially love the passage: "Good cooking is in the very best sense a craft, involving the heart, head, and hands simultaneously. . . . Teach your hands, above all, to remember that you are preparing food, not culinary artwork, that is to be savoured and shared with others at your table... This is cooking."

## OUR COOKING PHILOSOPHY

Our goal at The Cook's Atelier is to help guests become more confident cooks. We welcome a wide variety of cooking levels, from total novices to restaurant chefs, in our Atelier kitchen. Our cooking philosophy is simple: It's all about using seasonal ingredients, mastering classic French techniques, and developing intuition in the kitchen. Rather than focusing strictly on classic Burgundian cuisine, our recipes are inspired by the bounty of the region, with seasonal vegetables and artisanal products always front and centre.

Your cooking will only be as good as the quality of ingredients you use. No matter how gifted you might be in technique, the end result will never be quite as good if you don't take the time to pay attention to the seasons, and to where you source your food. Living in Beaune, we are fortunate to be able to find our ingredients locally and quite affordably.

France, for the most part, still puts a significant value in the pleasure of eating well and supporting small farmers and artisan producers. As the world gets more and more homogenized, we feel that traditions such as kitchen gardens, small farms, and charcuterie- and cheese-making, as well as artisanal baking should be protected. We do our best to help support these crafts by shopping locally



and sharing these traditions with our guests as well. We enjoy teaching our guests what to look for when buying artisanal products, and encourage them to support their own small, local food producers back home.

We are big believers that less is more when it comes to good cooking, and when you use best-quality ingredients, even the simplest dish will shine. Like the French, we shop for food more frequently and in smaller quantities, planning a menu around what's available. We have a knack for spotting authentic farmers at the



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market and enjoy engaging with them and learning about their stories. To us, a true artisan food producer is someone who is growing, harvesting, and producing food, rather than just selling it at the market. We gain immense satisfaction in knowing that we are supporting small farmers and eating clean food. It's important to strive to buy fresh produce in season – not only does it taste better, it's also healthier and generally more affordable.

Having a strong grasp of classic cooking techniques and basic core principles – from how to hold a knife properly, to mastering classic sauces and stocks, to understanding how

to properly sear, sauté, roast, braise, season, and so on – is the key to becoming a better cook. We always teach our students how to first make things by hand, instead of using a food processor or stand mixer, so they really get a feel for the process.

Not that we are against machines, but there's no substitute for your hands in the kitchen. When making bread or pastry dough, for example, using your hands gives you a memory of exactly how the dough should feel, so the next time you make the recipe, you'll know when to add more flour or when to stop kneading.

We created this book as an extension of our French cooking school, providing an approachable and beautiful Cooking School section, to give in-depth instruction on classic French cooking techniques and recipes we feel every cook should know (see pages 332–91). As you practice and begin to master the fundamentals of French cooking, your confidence as a cook will improve, empowering you to develop your own style of cooking.

As you become a better cook, part of the journey is to let go of just following a recipe. We feel it's important for a good cook to begin with certain fundamental classic techniques and methods, and then, with some practice, start to hone in on their own intuition in the kitchen to make a recipe ultimately into their own.

Cooking should be enjoyable, and in our minds, it's difficult to be a good cook if you don't take pleasure in the actual process – and in eating. As you gain more and more confidence, you will be able to adapt recipes, making adjustments here and there, depending on what's available in your region. We hope that you view our recipes not as a rigid dicta, but as suggestive guides to help hone your cooking



## Roasted Leg of Lamb with Fava Beans

**Lamb is at its very best in the spring, and we make this dish at least once a year in celebration of the season.**

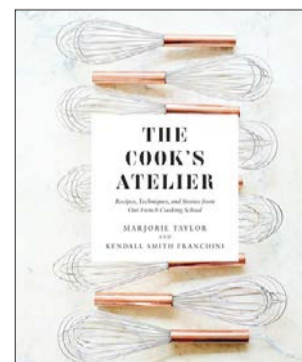
### Ingredients, serves 8-10

1 (2.7kg) whole bone-in leg of lamb  
10 sprigs rosemary, plus more for garnish  
Fleur de sel and freshly ground black pepper  
Extra-virgin olive oil  
1 tablespoon unsalted butter  
8 cloves garlic, smashed  
1 lemon, thinly sliced  
1 small handful of fresh sage  
6 cups fresh shelled fava beans (from 2.7kg in the pod)

### Method

1. Remove the leg of lamb from the refrigerator and let it come to room temperature before roasting. Remove any fell, the papery membrane covering the leg of lamb, plus any thick sections of fat. Be sure to leave a thin layer of the fat, so the lamb doesn't dry out while roasting. Pat the lamb dry. Preheat the oven to 400°F (205°C).
2. Using kitchen twine, tie the roast to secure the meat for even roasting. Place the sprigs of rosemary under the twine. Season with salt and pepper.

3. In a large bowl, combine 1 cup of olive oil with 1 cup of lemon juice. Add the remaining ingredients and mix until browned. Cook for 6 to 8 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to remove the beans. Serve with the olive oil and lemon juice. Peel the beans and serve with the olive oil and lemon juice.
4. Make a pot of fava beans. Drain and rinse. Add to a bowl with the olive oil and lemon juice. Peel the beans and serve with the olive oil and lemon juice.



**The Cook's Atelier** by Marjorie Taylor and Kendall Smith Franchini (Abrams, On Sale: 10 Apr 2018, £35.00). Photographs copyright © 2018 Anson Smart



large roasting pan, heat a drizzle of oil over medium-high heat but not smoking. Sear the lamb and sear, turning, until seared and caramelized on all sides, about 5 minutes. Add the butter and salt, and as soon as the butter melts, use a spoon to baste the lamb for a few minutes. Place the pan in the oven and roast the meat with a thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the meat until it reaches 130°F (55°C) for medium-rare, about 1 hour. The internal temperature will rise to 145°F (63°C) while standing. Let the leg of lamb rest on a warm cutting board for about 20 minutes before carving.

**For the fava beans:** Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and fill a bowl with ice and water. Add the fava beans to the boiling water and blanch until tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Immediately plunge the fava beans into the ice water to stop the cooking and reserve their color. Once the fava beans are cool enough to handle, peel them, then pop off their pale skins to release the bright green beans. Discard the skins. Place the beans in a large bowl and drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper.

Place the lamb whole on a large platter surrounded with the fava beans, lemon slices, and sage. Garnish with rosemary.

## Sweet Pea Soup with Crispy Bacon and Herbed Cream

This bright-green soup can be made the day before you serve it, and is delicious served warm or cold.

### Ingredients, serves 6

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 960ml Vegetable Stock
- 6 cups fresh shelled sweet peas (from 2.7 kg in the pod)
- 25g fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 13g fresh mint leaves
- Fleur de sel and freshly ground black pepper
- Two slices thick bacon, cut into lardons
- 60ml crème fraîche
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh chives; Chive blossoms or pea shoots (optional)



### Method

1. In a large heavy pot, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté until soft and translucent, about five minutes. Add (480ml) of the vegetable stock and bring it to a boil. Add the peas and simmer gently, adjusting the heat as needed, until tender, about 5 minutes.
2. Remove from the heat and add the parsley, mint, and the remaining 480ml vegetable stock. In a blender, puree the soup in batches until smooth, then strain through a chinois. Season with salt and pepper and set aside.
3. In a small sauté pan, cook the lardons over medium heat until crispy and cooked through, 5 to 8 minutes. Transfer them to the paper towel-lined plate to remove excess grease and set aside. In a small bowl, whisk together the crème fraîche, heavy cream, and chives.
4. Divide the soup among bowls and top each with a spoonful of the crème fraîche mixture. Garnish with the lardons and chive blossoms, if using, and serve immediately.

## Rustic apricot tart

At the market in Beaune, we have the most beautiful rose-coloured Bergeron apricots in the late spring and early summer. They are perfect for this tart, as they are sweet and delicate, yet still hold their shape well.

### Ingredients, serves 6

- Unbleached all-purpose flour, for dusting
- Pâte Sucrée (sweet pastry, see right)
- 1 large egg yolk
- 3 tablespoons heavy cream
- 100g sugar, plus more for sprinkling
- Seeds of ½ vanilla bean
- ¼ teaspoon fleur de sel
- 910g Bergeron apricots
- Crème fraîche or whipped cream, for serving
- Confectioners' sugar, for dusting



### For the Pâte Sucrée

- 187.5g unbleached all-purpose flour
- 50g sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon fleur de sel
- 112.5 g cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
- 1 large egg yolk
- 40ml heavy cream

### Method: Pâte Sucrée

1. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, and salt. Add the butter. Using your hands, gently toss to coat the butter in the flour mixture. Scoop the mixture in your hands and gently press the flour mixture and butter between your fingertips until the mixture looks grainy, with some small pieces of butter still visible. Work quickly to ensure the butter stays cold.
2. In a small bowl, lightly beat the egg yolks and cream. Drizzle over the dough and use a fork to gently toss until incorporated. Continue working the dough, gently squeezing it between your fingertips until it comes together and there is no dry flour visible. Be careful not to overwork the dough. It's ready as soon as you can squish the dough in one hand and it stays together. Freeze it for 15 to 20 minutes.

### Method

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). In a small bowl, whisk together the egg yolk and cream. Use a pastry brush to lightly brush the egg over the dough. Partially blind bake the tart shell, then remove and raise the oven temperature to 400°F (205°C).
2. In a small bowl, combine the sugar, vanilla seeds, and salt. Set aside.
3. Cut the apricots in half and remove the pits. If the apricots are small, cut them into quarters; if they're large, cut them into eighths. Place the apricots in a large bowl, sprinkle with the sugar mixture, and gently toss until evenly coated.
4. Working quickly, arrange the apricot slices, tightly overlapping, on the bottom of the tart shell, forming a tight, compact circle. The apricots will shrink as they cook, so try to fit as much fruit in the tart shell as possible. Scrape any remaining sugar mixture left in the bowl over the apricots, then lightly sprinkle them with more sugar. Bake until the pastry is golden and the fruit is cooked through and slightly caramelized, 40 to 45 minutes. The finished tart should have a jamlike consistency, with a golden, flaky crust. The liquid will be bubbling. Let the tart cool to room temperature before serving and then dust with confectioner's sugar. Serve with a dollop of crème fraîche. The tart is best eaten the day it is made.



## En saison: What to put on your plate in May

Because the French never eat strawberries in winter and even different types of goat's cheese have seasonality...

### French seasonal basket

#### Fruit

Strawberry, rhubarb

#### Recipe: Rhubarb and strawberry shortbread

Ingredients: 500g rhubarb, 30g sweet butter, 50g brown sugar, 400g strawberries. For the dough: 180g flour, 150g very cold semi-salted butter, 70g sugar, the rind of a lemon, one egg and a yolk.

Peel the rhubarb and cut it into chunks. Cook it over low heat for 15 minutes in a saucepan with brown sugar and butter. Reduce the juice until almost caramel-like. Dice the butter. Combine flour, butter, zest and sugar. Rub quickly with fingertips until coarse sand is obtained. Beat the whole egg and the yolk with a fork and add to the dough. Put it into a ball, then put it in the refrigerator for 1 hour. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Spread the dough in circles on parchment paper. Cook for 20-25 minutes. Arrange rhubarb and strawberries atop the shortbread at the last minute.



#### Vegetables

Asparagus, garlic, chard, chestnuts, watercress, fine herbs (parsley, dill, chives, oregano, sage, coriander, tarragon), sorrel, peas, radishes, turnips, carrots, early leeks, young spinach shoots, early potatoes, purslane, artichoke, beans.

#### Focus on: radishes

Fresh, light and crunchy, the radish

belongs to the cruciferous family – it is a root vegetable just like cabbage. There are several varieties, different colours, sizes and shapes: pink, white, reds, blacks (the black one is a winter vegetable), bi-colored with white collar, long, round, small, big... France is the leading European producer with 51,000 tonnes produced annually, just ahead of the Netherlands. The two main production regions are Pays de Loire and Ile-de-France.

Radishes can be stored in the vegetable box for about a week, but the leaves must be cut and washed beforehand. They can be eaten with bread and butter to enjoy its spicy flavour or served sliced in salads with other crudites.



#### Fish, shellfish and crustaceans

Conger, sea bream, haddock, herring, turbot, monkfish, halibut, mackerel, whiting, sardine, albacore tuna, crayfish, langoustine, scallops.

#### Focus on: sardines

Sardines belongs to the Clupeidae family, the same as herring or anchovies. They live in schools in the Mediterranean and Atlantic, from Norway to Senegal. In season from April to September, it is a summer fish par excellence.

Sardines should be eaten as soon as possible after purchase (keep for two days in the refrigerator).

#### Recipe: Sardine rillettes

Ingredients: two sardines, one lemon, 100g fromage frais, two tablespoons olive oil, one tablespoon strong mustard, a few sprigs of chives.

In a saucepan, place the sardines in a large volume of water with a small handful of coarse salt. Bring to the boil, turn off and let cool in water. Drain the fish, remove skin, bones and crumble the flesh into a large bowl. Add the fromage frais, 1 tablespoon of lemon juice, olive oil and mustard. Season with salt and pepper, stirring with a fork. Add chopped chives.

For our artisan cheese pick for May, see page 15