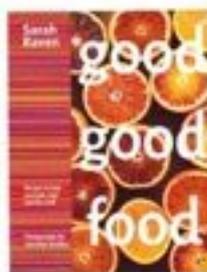


TASTE NOTES

News, reviews and tips for cooks and food lovers, by Blanche Vaughan

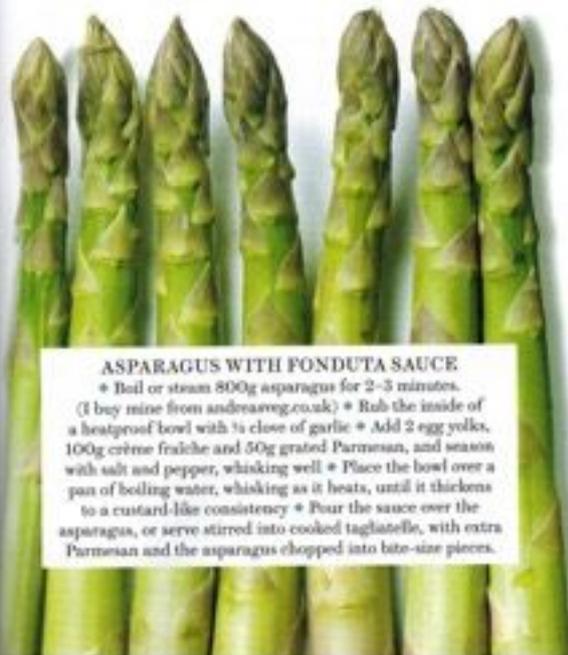


All good

Sarah Raven's latest book, *Good Good Good Food* (Bloomsbury, £25), responds to our growing appetite for **healthy recipe ideas**. Inspired by the Mediterranean diet and produce grown in her own garden, these are recipes to make you feel and look well, with no compromise on flavour. She shows us that eating healthily is a pleasure, not a penance.

SEASONAL SUGGESTIONS

Sea trout, samphire, new potatoes and asparagus are all at peak season now. Pan-fry sea trout fillets and serve with brown butter and capers alongside lightly blanched samphire and herbed potatoes for the perfect early-summer supper. One of my favourite ways to eat **asparagus** is with a creamy fonduta sauce (see recipe below, serving 4 as a starter).



ASPARAGUS WITH FONDUTA SAUCE

• Boil or steam 800g asparagus for 2-3 minutes. (I buy mine from andreasveg.co.uk) • Rub the inside of a heatproof bowl with ½ clove of garlic • Add 2 egg yolks, 100g crème fraîche and 50g grated Parmesan, and season with salt and pepper, whisking well • Place the bowl over a pan of boiling water, whisking as it heats, until it thickens to a custard-like consistency • Pour the sauce over the asparagus, or serve stirred into cooked tagliatelle, with extra Parmesan and the asparagus chopped into bite-size pieces.



Casa Mariol, a Catalonian artisan vermouth, will shake off any fusty image you might have of **vermouth**. It has a base of Macabeo grape wine, flavoured with rosemary, thyme, orange zest and 130 aromatics. The Spanish drink it straight – with ice, an orange slice and a green olive – as an aperitif. Vermouth is also excellent to cook with: use it to marinate red meat, in risotto, or added to granita. Casa Mariol Vermut Negro costs £16.95 for 1 litre, from dorstwine.co.uk.



CLOSE TO THE EDGE

Sharp knives are a cook's greatest aid in the kitchen. Naifu's range combines the razor-sharp, flexible qualities of layered Damascus steel (which gives the distinctive mottled pattern, like the surface of flowing water) with a lasting durability. Its ceramic roll sharpener will maintain the all-important 'edge', and non-slip handles make cutting safer, too. Knives start at £22 from chefs-knifestore.co.uk.

FOOD & TRAVEL NEWS



The **Potting Shed Café** is the pop-up restaurant to visit this summer, set in the gardens of Asthall Manor during the On Form sculpture biennial (June 12 to July 10; see "Outside interests" for details on one of the exhibits). Chef Fiona Cullinane will be cooking seasonal, vegetarian dishes using produce from the kitchen garden, such as carrots, pictured above. Other salads include Lebanese beetroot salad with tahini, yogurt and mint dressing, and poached summer vegetables with aioli. onformsculpture.co.uk/the-potting-shed



Broste Copenhagen's range of **tableware**, featuring leaf-like and decorative items is created with an eye on Nordic traditions, while remaining cool and contemporary. We've used some of the plates for the "Northern Stars" recipes on the previous pages. The 'Nordic' plates pictured cost from £6.75 for a side plate. brostecopenhagen.com

Rosé glow

The arrival of the new vintage of **Domaine Templier Bandol rosé** is worth celebrating. This kind of rosé sells out quickly, so stock up as – unusually for rosé – it improves with age. Well balanced and fresh, with the complexity to handle flavourful food, it is £22.95 from Lea & Sandeman. leaandsandeman.co.uk □



FOCUS ON... *Isabel Bannerman*



Isabel Bannerman is well known for her garden designs, but for over a decade she has also been producing beautiful botanical photographs. Set on striking black backgrounds, the images capture in clear-cut detail a range of plants in various stages of life – from bursting bud to decaying husk.

These are undeniably beautiful images, but her work isn't always about conventional beauty – she moved on from capturing perfect, designer magnolia blooms a long time ago. 'I'm curious about the plants,' she says. 'It's as much about deconstruction as anything – I pull them apart to reveal what's inside. Sometimes what is there is quite brutal.' A bursting peony seed, for example, is dark and sinister, a rictus grin full of rotting teeth. There is beauty, too, in decay: the faded splendour of a tulip as its petals splay and twist, shown in *Faded Flourish*, pictured, the

metallic sheen of a nerine seedpod, or the antique silk of a bleached magnolia bloom.

The images are strangely compelling, almost painfully intense on the eye, and this is partly because they are made with a scanner rather than a camera. 'It's a trick, really,' explains Isabel. 'I don't use a camera at all. In America, they call this scanography. I use a conventional scanner and have made a black box for it to create the black background. It means there is a very limited depth of field so the focus is all on the plant.' The result is a body of work that truly captures the essence of each plant, challenging us to look anew at the complexities of nature. *Isabel Bannerman's photographs will be exhibited at 'On Form' at Auhall Manor, Oxfordshire, on June 12–July 10 (tickets, £10), and she will be giving a talk there at 2pm on June 12; onformsculpture.co.uk. To buy prints of her work, which start at £2,000, visit jonathancooper.co.uk*

TOP 5 MAIL-ORDER PLANT NURSERIES

Buying plants by mail order is often the way to get hold of exactly the species and varieties you are looking for, and while some specialist nurseries prefer to concentrate on selling from their premises, others are more geared up to mail order. Here is our pick of the best, chosen for range, plant quality and packaging.

[1]

THE BETH CHATTO GARDENS

There are over 2,000 plants in stock, most propagated from plants grown in the garden, including perennials, ferns and grasses, for all garden situations. Great value for money. bethchatto.co.uk

[2]

CROCUS

Selling online only, Crocus offers a huge range of good-quality plants, from perennials to box balls. The plants are expensive, but it's a good one-stop shop. crocus.co.uk

[3]

CRUG FARM PLANTS

One of the most cutting-edge plant collections in the country, with exotic plants collected from all around the world by owners Bleddyn and Sue Wynn-Jones. crug-farm.co.uk

[4]

BINNY PLANTS

It has a large collection of perennials, including the largest range of peonies in Britain. binnyplants.com

[5]

LONG ACRE PLANTS

A must for anyone looking for shade-loving plants, including ferns and woodland bulbs. plantsforshade.co.uk