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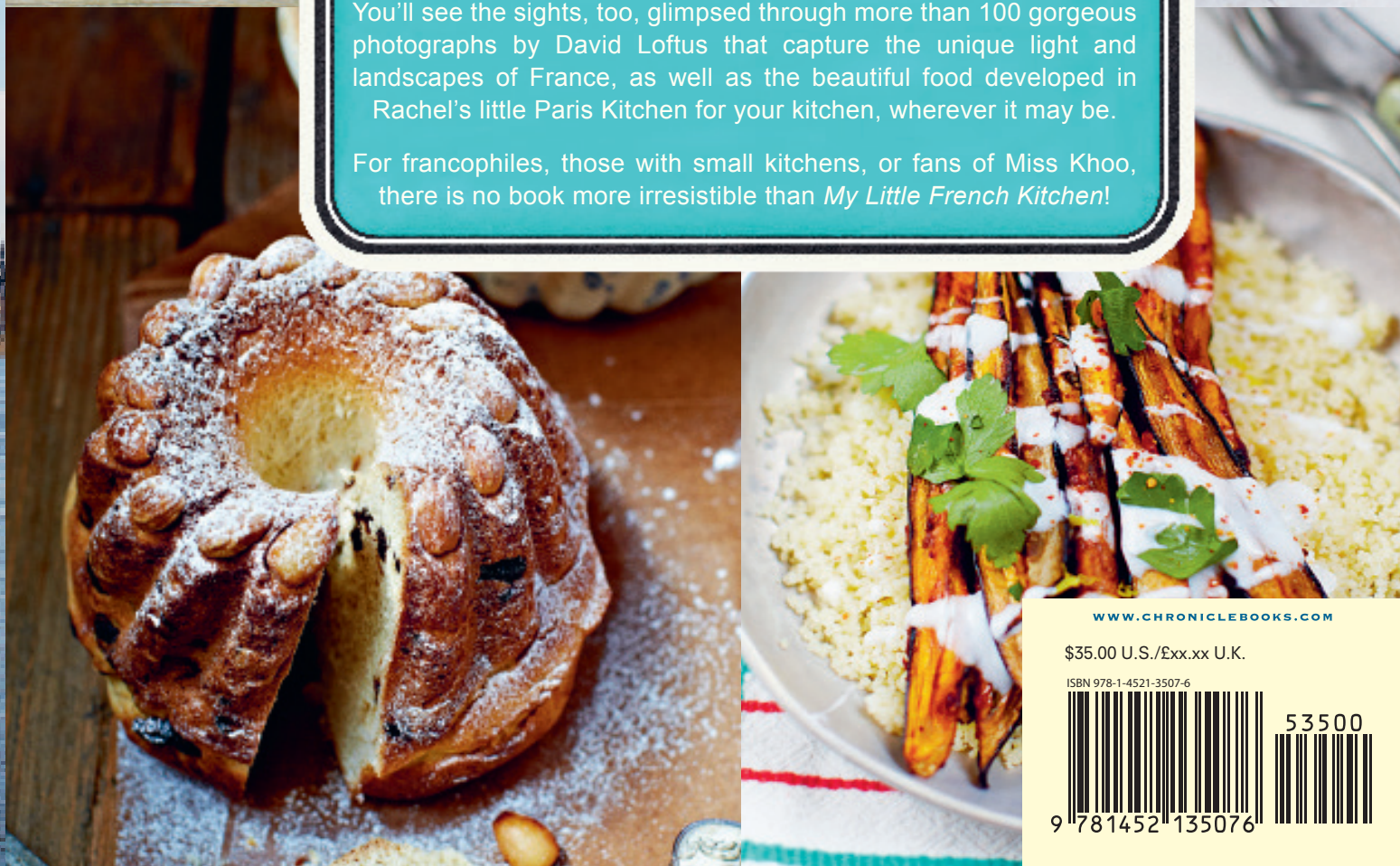
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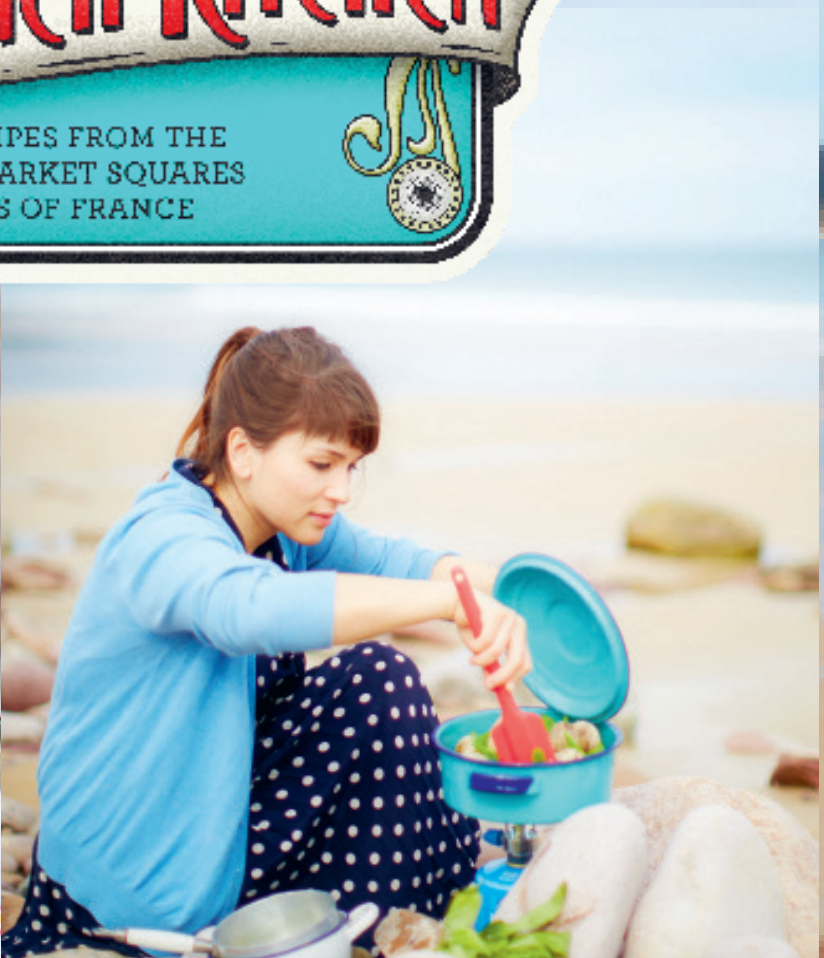
Join Rachel Khoo on her travels through the French countryside, tasting the best regional foods of France, from mussels in Brittany to bright ratatouille in Provence. In this book, more than 100 rustic recipes developed in her little Paris kitchen and inspired by her edible adventures bring the flavors and favorite dishes of Brittany, Bordeaux, Basque, Provence, Lyon, and Alsace into your kitchen. You'll see the sights, too, glimpsed through more than 100 gorgeous photographs by David Loftus that capture the unique light and landscapes of France, as well as the beautiful food developed in Rachel's little Paris Kitchen for your kitchen, wherever it may be.

For francophiles, those with small kitchens, or fans of Miss Khoo, there is no book more irresistible than *My Little French Kitchen*!



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RACHEL KHOO MY LITTLE FRENCH KITCHEN



**MY LITTLE FRENCH KITCHEN** is Rachel Khoo's love letter to her adopted country. In this book, she chronicles her travels to the four corners of France and back to her little Paris kitchen, bringing home all the regional dishes, ingredients, techniques, and inspirations she encountered along the way. This book details the places Rachel visited; highlights the people who welcomed her into their homes, shops, and restaurants; and features all the wonderful recipes she developed in her tiny kitchen at the conclusion of her journey.

From the snow-topped mountains and spice-laden Christmas markets of Alsace to winemaking Bordeaux, sun-drenched Provence, and the windswept beaches of Brittany, Rachel visits some of the most food-centric places on the planet, uncovering hidden gems to share with you.

Re-create the taste of these places in your own kitchen, from a Bordelais Roast Red Wine Chicken that would be perfect for Sunday dinner to a collection of Basque pinxtos to serve at your next party. Of course there are plenty of whimsical sweets—Chocolate Beret Cake or Cream Puff Lighthouses, anyone?—as well as cocktails, preserves, and other kitchen projects to round out the mix.

Let Rachel take you on a delicious journey through France in this charming cookbook.



Also available:



# My Little French Kitchen

Over 100 recipes from the mountains, market squares  
and shores of France

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With photography by David Loftus  
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# Brittany



## BLUE AND WHITE STRIPES, BUTTERY DELIGHTS AND COASTAL COOKING

'*Le crachin*', as the Bretons refer to the so-called 'spitting rain', was almost constant when I visited the region in the early months of the year. I prefer to think of it more as a fine mist from a fancy water spray than conjuring up the image of someone spitting sporadically. The persistent drizzle wasn't the only thing that was like home: the lush green pastures, neatly trimmed hedges and pretty stone country cottages reminded me of the verdant British landscape around where I grew up in Berkshire. It is easy to see how Brittany acquired the nickname 'Little Britain'.

Brittany is one of France's most iconic regions, being the home of many of the country's most popular foodstuffs, as well as the sartorial export of blue and white stripes. Butter, *galettes*, *crêpes*, caramel, *fleur de sel*, dairy and all its derivatives are entrenched in the food culture. The young pasta producer I met (see page XX) claimed to consume 750g of butter per week. As I offered him a taste of a buttery kouign-amann (see page XX), he declined. Apparently, he was making an effort to cut down.

Thanks to this abundance of dairy produce and other such delights, Brittany is one of the best places in France to have breakfast. French breakfasts are often an afterthought, usually consisting of a cup of black coffee and a flaky croissant at best, and toasted leftover baguette at worst. However, I enjoyed some exemplary homemade breakfasts during my stays at various bed and breakfasts around the region, including homemade jams and breads as well as the thickest, creamiest homemade yoghurt, which inspired my recipe on page XX. One of the most epic of the breakfasts featured the legendary kouign-amann, Brittany's greatest pastry. Having told my host that I had had some disappointing ones during my first couple of days (either soggy, too pale or greasy), she not only served a delicious homemade spread of breads, croissants, jams and yoghurt but also the most buttery, golden, caramelized kouign-amann. And, true to form, and sheer hospitality, despite all my

efforts to taste and try everything, the hosts always wanted me to eat more.

At the morning markets of Dinan and Rennes, a more unlikely breakfast treat was *de rigueur* from the various food trucks sandwiched between produce sellers.

Now, *crêpes* and *galettes* were nothing new to me: Paris has a *crêperie* on every corner and around the Montparnasse area there are plenty of Breton *crêperies*. However, what I found rather intriguing was what they filled the buckwheat pancakes with. Not the regular egg and cheese, but a grilled, quite spicy (for the French) sausage. The sausage was simply popped whole in the middle of each *galette* and the pancake wrapped tightly around it to make a sort of *galette* hot dog.

Markets are among Brittany's highlights. The *Marché des Lices* on Saturdays in the centre of Rennes is probably one of the best markets I've been to in France. Unlike most of the markets in Paris, where the selection is excellent but resellers and not farmers operate most stands, in Rennes the producers themselves run the majority. Being in a coastal corner of France, the choice of seafood is out of this world. I have never seen such big lobsters, oysters in every size and shape possible, cockles, clams, razor clams, mussels, scallops and fish fresh off the boat, glistening on ice.

One stand just sold purple garlic, another freshly dried herbs and teas, another specialized in asparagus, all an easy sell when the producer's pride and knowledge is so apparent. Quick recipes were being spread like wildfire, enticing people to purchase their lovely merchandise, while discussing the secret to their beautiful fare.

More secrets were discovered on a trip to Saint-Malo, the beautiful town on the coast set within a medieval wall, known as the *ville intramuros*. I recognized its iconic architecture from the Saint-Malo yoghurt that you can buy all across France. Down a cobbled street I found the king of butter, Yves Bordier, with his renowned boutique and restaurant, complete with butter museum. Bretons love their butter and Yves Bordier reigns supreme on the menus of the finest restaurants in France and abroad (if you use Bordier butter in your menu then you definitely advertise it). His butter looks like little yellow bricks flecked with sea salt, seaweed, smoked salt or even yuzu. His artisanal and traditional approach gives the butter a dense crumbly texture. And the best way to enjoy it is simply spread on bread. He also sells some excellent tinned sardines that are cooked and left to marinate in Bordier butter.

Heading out of the towns filled with timber-framed houses and tight ancient streets, the rugged beauty of Brittany's coast is awe-inspiring. Lighthouses pop up on rocky cliffs with stretches of sandy beaches sandwiched inbetween. Cap Fréhel lies on one such cliff, with its majestic green-tipped beacon surrounded by moorland and marshes in a protected nature reserve. Here, the nature is wild and left to its own devices. Small rocks jut out of the wet sand at low tide, revealing wild mussels and seaweed. The salt in the air has you licking your lips, stirring up an appetite for a picnic or some cooking on the beach (see page XX).

Sea salt is big business in Brittany but also a very time-consuming one. It is carefully harvested mainly around Guérande, the southwestern corner of Brittany where they produce the famous *fleur de sel*, a finishing sea salt prized by chefs and food enthusiasts. In Guérande, a salt worker produces an average of 60–90 tonnes of coarse salt and 2–3 tonnes of *fleur de sel* every year. I was given a tour by a veritable *paludier*, part of the Sel de Guérande cooperative, who owns part of the 'ponds' on which he works. His wife runs a similar operation, having acquired ponds of her own not far from his, and you could tell from his fascination with the process that they were serious salt anoraks. Salt is harvested in the summer months, but requires meticulous attention throughout the year in preparation, as well as a great deal of *savour faire* adapting to the whims of the weather at any time. Clay walls are built and maintained inside the ponds, for the salt water to be ushered through, and it is eventually raked into piles to dry. The *fleur de sel* are the delicate crystals that develop on the top of the water and they are pulled aside for light seasoning.

From the knob of butter that sizzles in the pan to the understated sprinkle of salt that brings an entire dish together, the gastronomy of Brittany may not have the sophisticated Parisian glamour or hang on the regal wine of Bordeaux, but it is responsible for produce that is fundamental to dishes created in renowned restaurants around the world. From flavoured butters used to cook scallops, moist sea bass baked in a salt crust, buttermilk tenderized lamb or choux pastry lighthouses with butter caramel sauce (see pages XX, XX, XX and XX), the recipes in this chapter draw their inspiration from those little touches and apply them to dishes that can be cooked in any kitchen (whether home or Michelin starred). I hope you fall for Brittany as much as I did.

CUT OVER  
MATTER

# Huîtres grillées au persillade

## OYSTERS GRILLED WITH PARSLEY CRUMBS

I love the purity of a just-shucked oyster, either as it comes or with a simple squeeze of lemon. But when they are in such abundance, as they are in Cancale and other parts of Brittany, you might as well experiment with different flavours. The crunchy texture of the breadcrumbs highlights the smoothness of the oyster flesh, providing a playful and delicious contrast.

### Makes 12

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

2 level tbsp butter

2 cloves of garlic, peeled and finely minced

4 tbsp white breadcrumbs (made from stale bread)

4 tbsp finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

12 oysters, shucked (see page XX)

wedges of lemon, to serve

Heat a frying pan over a medium heat. Add the butter and garlic. Once the butter is melted and the garlic slightly softened, add the breadcrumbs, stirring every so often until light golden. Place in a bowl and toss with the parsley.

Preheat the grill to high. Remove any excess juices from your shucked oysters. Place the oysters on a tray that will hold them upright (madeleine or muffin tins work well) and grill for 2–3 minutes. Sprinkle over the breadcrumb mixture and serve with the lemon wedges.

**Les petites astuces – tips** If you don't have a Madeleine or muffin tray, make a bed out of rock salt on a baking tray and nestle the oysters in it (see page XX).

**Faire en avance – get ahead** The parsley breadcrumbs can be made in advance and stored in an airtight container for a couple of days.

Un-shucked oysters will keep for about two days. Check with your fishmonger.



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## Court bouillon de Breton

BRITTANY BOUILLON

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Forget salty stock cubes and their powdered counterparts – in Brittany, sachets of gourmet bouillon are *de rigueur*. Made using the locally available seaweed adds an extra angle to this essential store-cupboard ingredient. Try adding to soups, sprinkling on salads or popping into a stew for a taste of *Bretagne*. This is a great recipe for making your own bouillon.

**Makes approx. 30g**

*Preparation time: 20 minutes*

*Cooking time: 3–4 hours*

*Resting time: overnight*

2 carrots, peeled

2 sticks of celery (ideally with leaves),  
remove the long strings from the  
celery

2 leeks, trimmed and washed

10 mushrooms, brushed

1 clove of garlic, peeled and finely  
sliced

1 tsp coarse sea salt

10g dried seaweed

Preheat the oven to 110°C. Use a speed peeler or vegetable peeler to make thin ribbons of carrot. Finely slice the celery (or, very carefully, use a mandolin with the guard). Pull apart the layers of the leek. Finely slice the mushrooms. Try to make all the vegetables an even thickness so that they take the same amount of time to cook.

Lay all the vegetables flat on parchment paper and arrange the celery leaves among the vegetables. Place the parchment paper directly on the oven rack and cook for 3–4 hours or until the vegetables lose their moisture and crisp up. Turn off the heat and leave them to dry out overnight in the oven with the door ajar.

Blitz the vegetables with the salt and seaweed in a food processor. Keep in an airtight container in a cool dark place.

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**Les petites astuces – tips** Make your own bouillon ‘teabags’ for a quick cup of soup. Cut out six squares of muslin, each approximately 8cm x 8cm. Place 1 tablespoon of the mixture in the centre of each muslin square. Gather the corners together and twist the ends tightly. Repeat with the rest of the muslin squares. Use a length of thread to secure the bag in a tight knot or tie with string; leave a long bit of thread for dunking.

# Daurade en croûte de sel

## HERBY SALT CRUST BREAM

Baking in a salt crust is possibly one of the most effective ways of cooking whole fish. Not only does unveiling the flesh from under a firm cast of salt at the dinner table look pretty classy, but it also traps all the moisture in the flesh while delicately seasoning it.

### Serves 4

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

1 lemon

1.5kg coarse sea salt

2 x 450g sea bream or sea bass,  
gutted and washed

a bunch of fresh sorrel or flat-leaf  
parsley (approx. 20g)

2 egg whites

steamed new potatoes, tossed in  
butter, to serve

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper.

Zest the lemon into a large bowl and mix with the salt. Cut the lemon into 4 wedges or slices and stuff 2 into the cavity of each fish, along with a couple of leaves of sorrel. Chop up the rest of the sorrel and set aside a couple of tablespoons for garnish. Mix the rest into the lemony salt, then mix in the egg whites. Spread half of the salt mixture over the lined baking tray. Lay the fish on top (with a couple of fingers' space between each piece). Cover the fish with the rest of the salt and bake in the oven for 20 minutes. When the fish is cooked, remove from the oven and use a knife to crack the crust and gently peel off the salt. Serve the fish with steamed new potatoes tossed in a little butter with the reserved sorrel.

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**Les petites astuces – tips** Make sure to use coarse sea salt as fine sea salt will dissolve in the egg white and won't form a solid crust.



# Millefeuilles aux galettes végétalien

## VEGAN MILLEFEUILLES

You can't visit Brittany or Normandy and not eat a sweet *crêpe* or a savoury *galette*. They are what *choucroute* is to the Alsatians; *pinchos* are to the Basques and *quenelles* to the Lyonnais (see pages XX, XX and XX). They are an integral part of the eating culture and best enjoyed with a bottle of the locally produced cider. Breton galettes are always savoury and are always made from buckwheat. Grown since the fifteenth century, buckwheat thrives here and Le Ble Noir de Bretagne is even protected from imposters with its own I.G.P. certificate.

### Serves 6

Preparation time: 40 minutes

Resting time: 1 hour, or overnight

Cooking time: 40 minutes

200g buckwheat flour

salt

600ml cold water

vegetable oil, for frying

100g Puy or beluga lentils

1 large courgette, chopped into 3mm cubes

2 red peppers, deseeded and chopped into 3mm cubes

200g cherry tomatoes, finely chopped

1 red onion, peeled and finely chopped

1 tbsp olive oil, plus a little extra for drizzling

freshly ground pepper

300g assorted tomatoes (available in supermarkets in mixed punnets)

1 tbsp lemon thyme

Mix the flour and a pinch of salt in a bowl. Make a well in the centre and gradually mix in the water, adding just enough for the batter to have the consistency of double cream. Don't over-mix, as this will produce rubbery galettes. Chill in the fridge for at least an hour, or overnight. Before using, whisk again and add more water if necessary.

Heat a 15–18cm non-stick crêpe pan or a small frying pan over a medium heat and brush with a little vegetable oil. Pour in a small ladleful of the batter and quickly swirl the pan so that the batter coats the base entirely. Cook for 1–2 minutes, loosen around the edge with a spatula, then turn it over and cook for a further minute. Slide the galette out of the pan, then repeat to make 12 galettes, greasing the pan with a little oil each time. Stack the galettes with layers of kitchen towel or baking paper between each one.

Cook the lentils in boiling salted water according to the packet instructions. Drain and mix together with the courgette, peppers, cherry tomatoes, onion and olive oil. Season, to taste, with salt and pepper.

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line a loose-bottom round baking tin (the size of the galettes) with baking paper. Place one galette at the bottom of the tin. Spread with some of the lentil mixture then top with another galette. Repeat until you have used up all the galettes (finishing with a galette).

Slice the mixed tomatoes and pack them in tightly on top of the galettes. Drizzle with a little olive oil and sprinkle with the thyme. Cook in the oven for 20 minutes. Eat while still hot from the oven.



**Les petites astuces – tips** Puy or beluga lentils are best for this dish, as they hold their shape (definitely don't use red lentils as they will become too mushy). Lentils should be cooked just until they are al dente.

It might seem tedious to chop everything up finely but it's important as otherwise the vegetables won't cook evenly.

**Faire en avance – get ahead** The galettes can be made a day in advance. Stack them with a piece of baking paper between each one and keep them wrapped in the fridge.



## *Les sardines rapide au vinaigre*

### QUICK PICKLED SARDINES

Shiny silver sardines from Brittany are rather renowned in the Breton markets. Up against the strong tides of the Quiberon Peninsula, the fish have a firmer flesh compared to their southern-European cousins. As a means of preserving their abundant catches, the Quiberonnaise have a long-standing tradition of cooking these little fish and preserving them under a layer of salted butter. An industry grew out of this and you'll find many small factories preserving the local product in dinky tins. This kind of preservation 'en boîte' tastes best when it's had at least a couple of days for the flavours to develop. This recipe is quite the opposite: too long in the fridge and you'll be left with sardine mush on your hands, making it perfect for those who are a little impatient.

**Serves 5 or 6 as a starter**

*Preparation time: 10 minutes*

*Resting time: 6 hours, or overnight*

150ml cider vinegar

150ml white wine vinegar

100g sugar

2 tsp table salt

2 bay leaves

10 black peppercorns

2 juniper berries

20 fresh sardine fillets, deboned

1 small cucumber (such as a Lebanese cucumber), sliced into very thin rounds

1 small red onion, peeled and finely sliced

1 lemon, zested and cut into wedges

Place all the ingredients apart from the sardines, cucumber, onion and lemon zest in a pot. Bring to the boil and stir until all the sugar has dissolved. Remove from the heat and leave to cool.

When the brine has cooled to room temperature, pour it into shallow non-metallic dish. Add the sardine fillets (check for bones), cucumber, onion and lemon zest. Make sure everything is submerged in the liquid. Cover the dish in cling film (not foil) and leave in the fridge for at least 6 hours, or overnight.

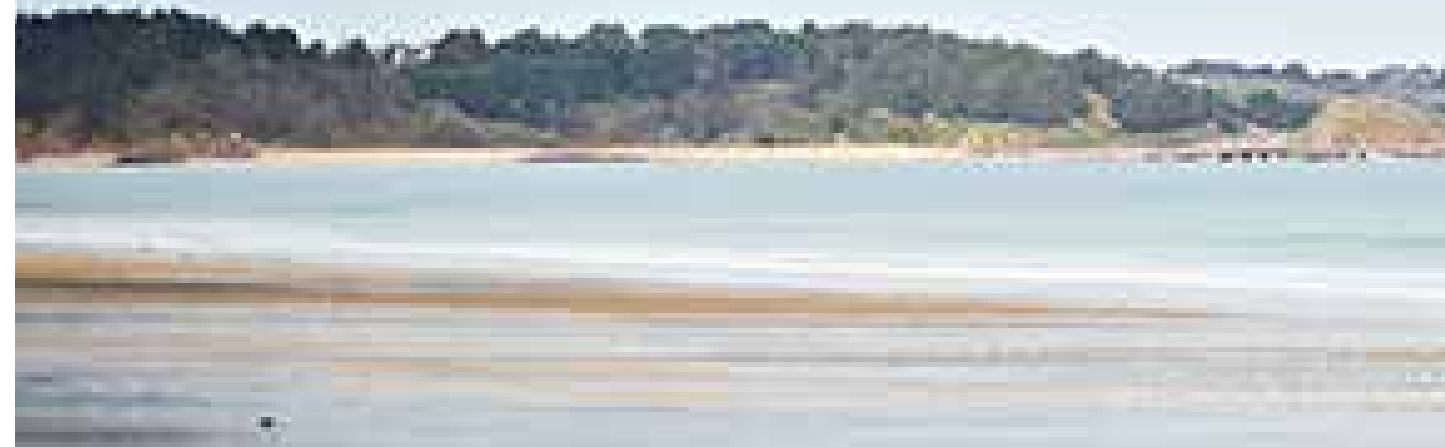
Serve on buttered rye bread or apple and caraway crackers (see page XX) with wedges of lemon.

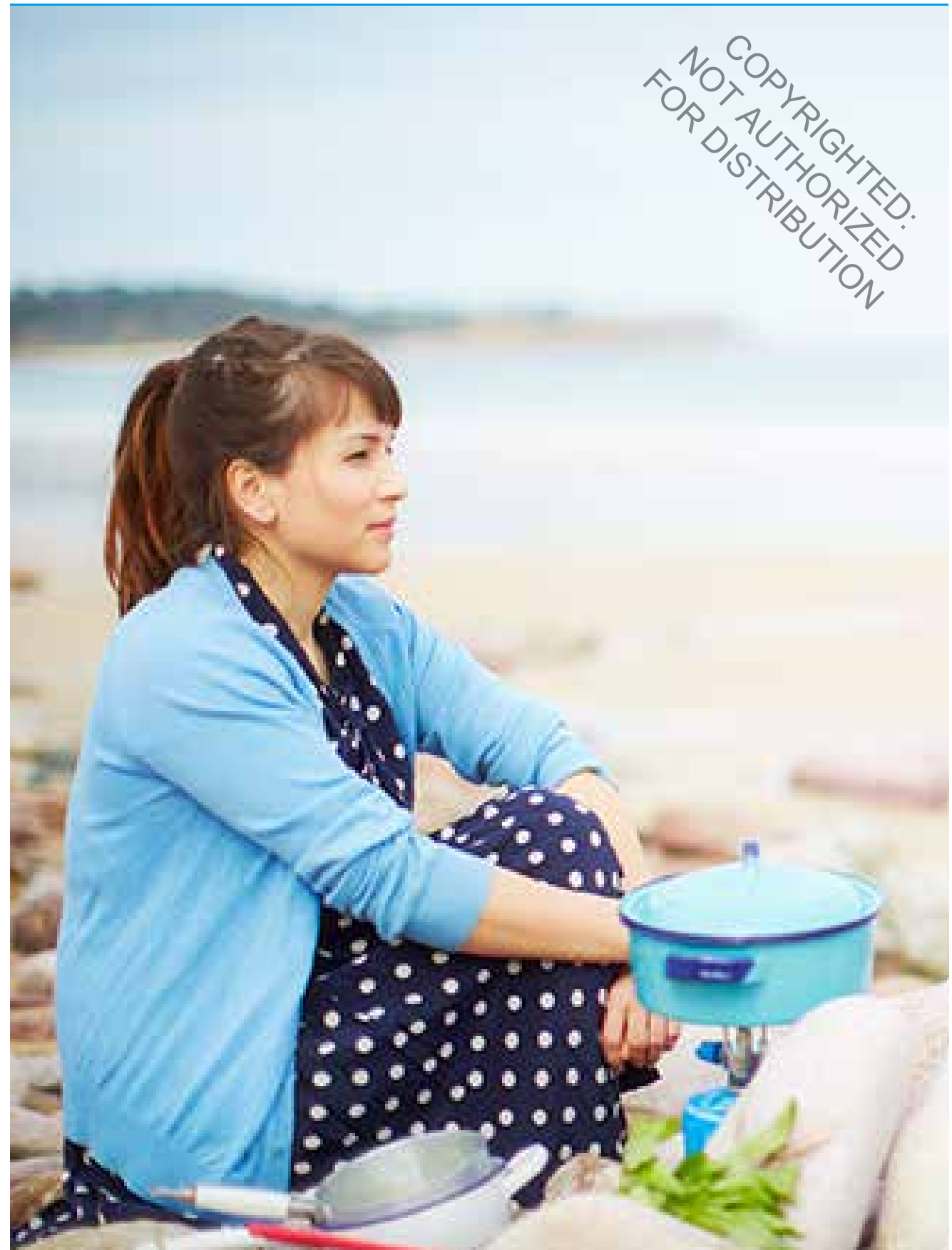
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**Les petites astuces – tips** Ask your fishmonger to fillet your sardines for you, as it is a fiddly process.

Don't forget your sardines in the fridge! If they are kept too long in the pickling liquid they will turn mushy after about 24 hours.

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# Pasta marinière à la calvados

## CLAM PASTA WITH CALVADOS CREAM

While in Brittany, I had the pleasure of meeting a dynamic young fellow, David Le Ruyet, who is on a one-man mission to make an impact on the local food scene. David grows his own wheat, mills it and then makes pasta, which he sells throughout France and beyond. Due to the weather conditions of the region, David works with the local wheat flour (blé tendre) rather than the traditional durum wheat used in pasta making.

In France they have many types of clam, but in the UK cockles are more commonly available and they are virtually the same beast. Their differences are found in their size, and the shape and direction of the ridges on their shells. Palourdes (carpet shell clams) are bigger, and therefore plumper and slightly juicier, but cockles are lovely little things, and much more economical, so don't let their posh counterparts sway you away.

### Serves 4

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

250g fettuccine, or pasta shapes such as fusilli or conchiglie

1 onion, peeled and finely chopped

1 tbsp butter

150ml calvados

2.5kg clams or cockles, or a mix, scrubbed, broken ones discarded

4 tbsp full-fat crème fraîche

125g mange tout or peas

4 medium fresh sorrel leaves (or a handful of fresh parsley), finely chopped

½ a lemon, zested and cut into wedges

Cook the pasta according to the packet instructions and then drain well through a colander.

In a second large pot cook the onion in the butter until soft and translucent. Add the calvados followed by the clams. Cover with the lid and cook for 2 minutes. Stir, cover with the lid and cook for a further 2–4 minutes; the clams should open up once cooked. If using cockles, cook them for just 2 minutes. Strain the clams through a colander placed over a bowl to catch the liquid and discard any that remain closed.

Return the drained pasta to its pan. Add 4 tablespoons of the strained clam cooking liquid and toss together along with the clams, onions, crème fraîche, mange tout, sorrel leaves and lemon zest. Serve with lemon wedges on the side.

**Les petites astuces – tips** If serving for a dinner party, shell some of the clams and toss them through the pasta before dividing between bowls. Divide the remaining clams in their shells between the bowls.

