

RIVER

CAFE

Rose Gray and Ruth Rogers

TWO

EASY

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veal shin, butter, white wine

Whole Dover sole
Whole leg of lamb, rosemary
Whole pear, cinnamon
Whole side of salmon

zucchini scapece
zucchini trifolati, tomato

RIVER CAFE TWO EASY

Rose Gray and Ruth Rogers



The River of



Photographs by David Loftus. Designed by Mark Porter

Introduction

River Cafe Two Easy is the second volume of River Cafe Cook Book Easy. It was in Puglia last May that we mapped out the chapters and wrote in our notebooks the easy and delicious recipes we wanted to include in this, our sixth cookbook.

Over the year we had travelled to cities and regions of Italy, both familiar and new — to Verona for Vin Italy, the huge wine fair, to Milan, to immerse ourselves in the tradition and sophistication of a city that takes food so seriously, to the Cinque Terre on the coast of Liguria for a family wedding, and to neighbouring houses in the Val d'Orcia in southern Tuscany, cooking with our friends and family.

Our first chapter, Mozzarella, like the Bruschetta chapter in River Cafe Cook Book Easy, is simply a putting together of ideas using a few seasonal ingredients. All quick, easy and delicious ways to begin a meal with mozzarella.

For us, salads are simple combinations of vegetables served at room temperature – grilled, boiled, roasted, slow-cooked and raw. In this chapter, there are boiled potatoes with just anchovies and capers, fine green beans cooked until soft then mixed with lumps of local hard cheese, and an unusual toasted bread and rocket salad with olives and vinegar.

Recently in The River Cafe we have increased our range of cured meats and salamis. We have also started to use traditional smoked fish such as eel and haddock, cutting them like Italian carpaccio and bringing out the flavour with olive oil and lemon juice.

In Puglia, we found tomatoes used in practically every dish, and it was there that we decided to devote a whole chapter to

tomato pasta. We have included a summery spaghetti with raw tomato and rocket, a winter pappardelle with pancetta and cream, and two recipes for preserving tomatoes.

Throughout Italy there are interesting variations combining fish with pasta. Every cook and restaurant has their own version of spaghetti vongole and we have included the versions we love – with white asparagus from Verona, fried zucchini from Rome, and broccoli from Naples.

We always have a soup chapter in our books. In this one many are meals in themselves, robust and distinctly regional. A chickpea soup we had eaten in Milan was a delicious way of cooking chickpeas with a piece of pork. In the same restaurant we found the pappardelle soup with borlotti beans. And in a trattoria in the market we had an intriguing soup of just red wine and broccoli – no bread, no herbs, but, as the chef told us, one crucial clove of garlic.

We have called our fish chapter Fish with... . In Tuscany we ate our favourite strong-flavoured fish, red mullet, with olives and anchovies, in Puglia we were surprised to eat a kind of sushi, thin slices of raw tuna with just a piece of bruschetta and lemon, and in Liguria we loved the simplicity of boiled langoustine with olive oil and sea salt.

We nearly always cook game birds with wine, looking for flavours in a particular wine to complement each bird. This is the first time in one of our books that we have suggested the variety of grape. Some of them are international varieties but all are produced in Italy.

For the roast meat chapter we have returned to traditional recipes such as pork cooked in milk, using the fattier shoulder instead of loin, and vitello tonnato, this time spread with a concentrated tomato and basil sauce or a strong mayonnaise flavoured with anchovy rather than tuna.

The flavour of the grill on meat and fish is very Italian which is why we have put them together. Grilling on a barbecue outside in the summer is quick and easy. It is all about simplicity – you take a fish, bird or steak and either marinate or brush it with olive oil using a rosemary stick.

From the beginning, our passion for vegetables has been at the heart of The River Cafe. The first thing we do when we arrive in Italy is to find the local market, which perfectly reflects the season and the region. As every Italian cook has many recipes for the same vegetable, we too have included more than one way of cooking zucchini, porcini, potatoes and aubergines. All are easy and rely on the quality of the vegetables.

The last three chapters of the book are devoted to puddings. Baking fruits is a way of concentrating their flavours. We use a lot of vanilla, cinnamon, ginger and different types of sugar, a style more River Cafe than Italian.

Lemon juice, lemon peel, and lemon essence feature frequently in the breakfast cakes, granitas, and cheesecakes we enjoy eating when in Italy. The lemon, ricotta, pinenut cake comes from a pasticceria in San Casciano, the vodka granita, from the bar of The River Cafe and the very, very easy lemon almond cake is similar to the ones served in the cafes on the autostrada.

We end the book the way we like to end a meal – with chocolate and coffee and those rich, indulgent cakes that we know everyone loves to eat. A bitter mousse cake, a hazelnut chocolate cake, and a boozy version of tiramisu.

Every now and again in River Cafe Two Easy, we have put in a more ambitious recipe. Killing a live crab may be something you have never done, and cooking a beef shin for twelve hours or a chicken for four may seem excessive but it is in this excess as well as in the simplicity of these recipes that we find the

pleasure and excitement in cooking. We hope you enjoy these easy recipes as much as we do.

Rose Gray and Ruth Rogers

All the recipes are for four except where mentioned. The cakes and tarts are for eight to ten.

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Mozzarella

beetroot, tomato, capers

raw zucchini, prosciutto

road bean, olives

ruschetta, tomato, olives

stuffed aubergine, roast tomato

salami, cannellini, olives

asparagus, rocket, Parmesan

summer herb, crème fraîche

red and yellow peppers, capers

stuffed fennel, prosciutto

farinated anchovy, spinach

celeriac, radish, Parmesan



Beetroot, tomato, capers

Boil the beetroots until tender, then peel and slice into 5mm discs. Slice the plum tomatoes into similar discs. Wash the salt from the salted capers, and drain. Mix the capers with red wine vinegar and olive oil. Combine the tomato and beetroot together, season, then stir in the capers and juices. Place on the plate with the mozzarella, and serve with torn-up basil leaves.



Beetroot, tomato, capers

Raw zucchini, prosciutto

Using a Y-shaped potato peeler, shred the zucchini into fine ribbons. Mix lemon juice with some olive oil, and season. Toss the zucchini in the dressing, adding a few rocket and mint leaves. Place on a plate, add the mozzarella, and lay slices of prosciutto over.



Raw zucchini, prosciutto

Broad bean, olives

Boil the broad beans until tender. Drain and season, add stoned small black olives. Toss the rocket and mint leaves with lemon juice and olive oil, and season. Tear the mozzarella into four. Put the leaves on the plate with the mozzarella. Sprinkle over the olives and broad beans.



Broad bean, olives

Bruschetta, tomato, olives

Cut the tomatoes into quarters and squeeze out the seeds and juice. Mix together with basil and olive oil, and season. Stone the small black olives, mix with black pepper, dried chilli, lemon juice and olive oil. Grill a piece of sourdough bread on both sides, then lightly rub one side with garlic. Season and pour over olive oil. Place on the plate with the olives, tomatoes and mozzarella.



Bruschetta, tomato, olives

Grilled aubergine, roast tomato

Cut plum tomatoes in half lengthways, and remove the seeds. Season with salt and pepper and drizzle with extra virgin olive oil. Bake in a 200°C/Gas 6 oven for 15 minutes. Slice an aubergine into 1cm discs, and grill on both sides. Toss with basil, olive oil and lemon juice. Season and place on the plate with the tomatoes and mozzarella.



Grilled aubergine, roast tomato

Salami, cannellini, olives

Drain and rinse a tin of cannellini beans, and gently heat with lemon juice and some olive oil. Season and purée. Stone the small black olives, and toss in a little olive oil. Finely slice the fennel salami, and place on the plate with the mozzarella. Put the bean purée alongside, and scatter with the olives.



Salami, cannellini, olives