

INTRODUCTION

GROWING AND COOKING WITH THE SEASONS

Looking back at my life so far, it is perhaps not entirely surprising that I have written a book about seasonal cooking. After all, my first and most rose-tinted memories are those of eating food straight from the plant.

My parents have always grown food. In summer, there would be plates of steaming artichokes, stems cut with a blunt knife, boiled in big pots and served with bowls of garlic-laced vinaigrette. We'd tear them apart leaf by leaf, drown them in vinegar and eat them with nothing but our bare hands and one tiny teaspoon (to remove the spiky choke from the heart). Then there were the cherry trees, fruit dripping like red baubles, fuzzy peaches and burnt orange nectarines. I'd pick plums covered in a silver-white 'bloom', polishing them back to their shiny red and green skin with scrunched up fistfuls of my t-shirt.

In winter, we'd eat broccoli raw, dipped in more garlicky vinaigrette. And macadamias - my parents would harvest the nuts as they fell from the tree, laying them out in the wintry sun to split apart, revealing the hard, brown and perfectly spherical shell that encased a white, buttery nut. Cracked, salted, and shoved in the oven until they turned from white to gold, we ate them while they were still hot. I remember crushing the porcupine casings of chestnuts on the ground with my gumboots until the glossy brown nuts popped out. Roasted over a fire, skin removed and covered in butter and salt, they tasted like floury, smoky, sweet potatoes.

In spring, we shelled sugar snap peas into plastic bags, eating them by the fistful in the back seat of

the car. And asparagus spears, protruding like green soldiers from the earth, which we snapped and ate raw in the garden.

The feeling of time passing, of buds appearing, to be replaced by blossoms, to be replaced by fruit, colours all of these moments. We never ate artichokes in winter - there were none. There were no peaches in autumn, no pumpkins in spring. The foods we picked and ate were inextricably linked to the moments we ate them. Cherries for Christmas. Field mushrooms fried in butter each March.

These temporal limitations don't have to exist anymore. You can eat an avocado, a cherry tomato or a grape 365 days a year. Bite into a nectarine in July and the only hint that something unusual has happened is the small sticker reading 'grown in the USA' that you peel off its flesh, and the extra \$4 it costs you. We have divorced ourselves from the seasons, and for some this might be cause for celebration. We have gained a whole world of gustatory delights - we need never go without.

But this convenience doesn't come for free.

We have paid for it with lost rituals. With food that doesn't mean the same thing it once did, because its prevalence makes it that little bit less special. We have forfeited the excitement of summer's first mangoes and the bittersweet pang of autumn's last apple. Worse still, we have made a bargain with flavour, sacrificing the truly delicious and ephemeral for the bland, the watery, the ever-present.

Like all deals made with the devil, we thought we were winning, when in fact we had lost.

The good news is, even if something is available at your supermarket, you are not automatically obliged to eat it! And the route back to seasonal dining is a laughably easy one; just don't eat things that have been shipped halfway across the planet or trucked halfway down the country.

Eliminating out-of-season foods carries so many benefits. The foods you do eat will be fresher, healthier, tastier. They will reach your plate at the expense of fewer carbon miles and to the benefit of more local growers. But even more than that - as you start to pare back your menu to just those foods that are in season, you may begin to notice other, little things, too. How, each year, the first blood oranges appear at the same time the wildflowers begin to bloom. How the tomatoes are so much redder in summertime than in winter. How their flavour is sweeter, deeper. How you find yourself waiting on tenterhooks for the first mango of the season, and how its bright orange flesh smells like pine sap and sugar.

Over time, you may notice how the herbs in those little plastic envelopes at your local supermarket don't really taste of anything. How they turn to dark green sludge moments after they're opened. You might buy a few pots, fill them with soil, and experiment with growing some of your own. And unlike chopped up, store bought herbs, your potted herbs will flower. The flowers will bring bees, lacewings and butterflies into your backyard.

After homegrown herbs, of course, come homegrown lettuces, then maybe a chilli plant next summer, or a tomato bush in spring. Some things might die or fail to fruit, but others will thrive, showing you just how deliciously rewarding a backyard bounty can be.

If you do decide to start growing your own food, I can tell you from experience that one thing will not change, no matter how much time passes: the sense of wonderment and satisfaction you will gain from pulling food directly from the soil and tossing it into your dinner. A primitive kind of joy - one too many of us have not yet had the pleasure of discovering.

Whether you prefer to grow your own food or buy fresh produce from local farmers, I hope this book will help inspire you not only to cook with the seasons, but to relish them as well. After all, your average lucky person gets just 82 springs in their lifetime. Only 82 summers, and autumns and winters. 82 strawberry seasons. 82 waves of fruit on the mulberry tree. Just 82 years, with all of the crisp, fresh, sweet, tart, spicy and fragrant flavours that each year contains.

I hope the recipes in this book will bring a little extra flavour to a small portion of those years. And I hope they will inspire you to eat what is freshest, come rain, hail or shine. For when all's said and done, life is too short and too important for limp lettuces, bland strawberries or tasteless tomatoes.

And now, to the kitchen!!
Xx Casey





ABOUT

THIS BOOK

This book is for anyone who would like to eat with the seasons. It is laid out into four chapters; summer, autumn, winter and spring. Within each chapter, recipes are grouped into three categories; salads & sides, mains and sweets. If you want to cook yourself a three course meal in any given season, you can simply pick one dish from each category and off you go.

That said, please don't feel you need to adhere to these categories in any kind of remotely obedient fashion. If you're heading to a barbecue, why not pick two of the heartier salads - I have found that most of them will sit very happily together on a picnic blanket. If you're throwing a pot luck, a couple of curries cooked in big pots should do the trick, or a few giant bowls of pesto pasta.

Now, I'm sure you don't need me to tell you how to use a cookbook, but for what it's worth I have found myself pleasantly surprised by how well the different dishes in the pages that follow complement and enhance each other. So, mix and match, chop and change. And above all, indulge so heavily and heartily that you have to loosen at least the topmost button of your jeans.

LONG AND SHORT HARVEST WINDOWS

I have grouped these recipes, as best I can, into the season when they will be freshest and most tasty. However, nature is never quite that precise, and some ingredients may be available and in season for longer than the chapters suggest. For example, passionfruits will often have two harvest windows each year - one in spring, another in autumn. Other ingredients, like broad beans, may be available for only the briefest window and so should be relished as soon as they appear. Your best bet is to start by shopping locally and seasonally, then use this book as a guide to cooking what you've found.

ADAPTING RECIPES TO YOUR GARDEN

If you are already growing your own food, I think you are wonderful and I insist that you adapt the recipes to include whatever you are harvesting from your garden. If you have strawberries instead of mulberries - use them! If you have silverbeet instead of lettuce, throw that in too. And feel free to add homegrown, fresh herbs wherever possible (you can almost never go wrong throwing fresh garden herbs into anything you cook).

A NOTE ABOUT BLIND BAKING

There are quite a few recipes involving pastry in this book (I love pastry). Whenever I'm cooking pastry I blind bake it. Blind baking involves lining the pastry with baking paper and weighing it down with pastry weights (if you don't have pastry weights you can use rice). This holds the pastry in place as it starts to cook, stopping it from shrinking down the sides of your pie tin. After blind baking (usually for 10-15 minutes), remove the weights and baking paper and return the pie shell to the oven to finish cooking.

A NOTE ABOUT OVEN TEMPERATURES

I live in a little old house with a little old (conventional) oven. So, my recommended oven temperatures are based on conventional ovens like my own. If your oven is fan forced, set it 20°C lower than each recipe recommends.

In most recipes, I will give you an approximate cooking time based on your oven or stove temperature, along with a few things you'll notice once the dish is done cooking (a knife inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean, the onion will turn golden brown, etc). Cooking is an imprecise art, and it is almost always better to respond to what the dish in front of you looks, smells or feels like, rather than sticking doggedly to a particular number of minutes spent cooking. Trust your gut, and most importantly, enjoy yourself!



PANTRY STAPLES

A GLOSSARY OF THE FLAVOURS I DEPEND ON

Here is a list of my favourite ingredients to have on hand whenever I'm cooking. These are sauces, pastes, herbs, spices and oils that boost flavour, add depth or enhance spiciness and they are well worth keeping in your fridge/pantry/garden at all times.

AGRUMATO If you're looking for a light but intense olive oil to dress your summer salads, you can't go past Agrumato. Unlike other flavoured oils (which are often flavoured after pressing to disguise the fact that the olive oil itself is sub-par), Agrumato is made by pressing whole lemons along with the olives. The combination of lemon oils and aromatics with grassy, rich olive oil is truly wonderful. Drizzle it over salads, freshly cooked pasta and bruschetta.

AJWAIN Ajwain is a plant in the same family as caraway, coriander, carrots and parsley. It is indigenous to Egypt and grows well in dry regions generally. The leaves and 'fruit' (which look like little fennel seeds) are often used in Indian dishes, and you should be able to find it at Indian supermarkets (ask for Ajwain seeds or Carom seeds). Bonus points if you chuck some of those seeds in your garden and try to grow more yourself!

BAY LEAVES Bay trees grow fantastically well in regions with a Mediterranean climate. They'll grow happily in a big pot in the sunshine and will reward you with deliciously fragrant leaves that taste fantastic in pasta sauces, stocks, soups and stews.

BERBERE Berbere is an Ethiopian spice mix that is easy to make yourself and will instantly deepen the flavours of any curry you throw it into. With plenty of smoky paprika, coriander, cardamom, fenugreek,

allspice, cloves and cinnamon, it adds a richness of colour and an earthy, smoky and complex spiciness to any dish. To make your own, see recipe on page 261.

CAPERS Capers, and their brine, are a brilliant ingredient for boosting the saltiness of a dish. I like to add them to tomato pasta sauces, chuck them on top of tarts, chop them finely and add them to salad dressings and scatter them on top of any dish that needs a little salty kick.

CONFIT GARLIC Confit garlic is my life, my drug, my passion. Juicy garlic cloves, submerged in olive oil and gently fried until they turn sweet, golden and delicious. It needs to be a part of your life - and your cooking. To make yourself a jar (or a hundred), see the recipe on page 267.

DANISH FETA Danish feta is every bit as delicious as Greek feta, but with a smoother and creamier flavour. If a dish calls for 'crumbled feta' I will go for Greek, but if I'm looking for something softer, gentler, more indulgent, I will always pick Danish feta. Add it to scrambled eggs, salads and tarts.

DASHI Dashi stock is, well, I could drink the stuff. It's so intense and so intensely wonderful, I use it to add a rich saltiness to any Japanese or Asian-style dishes I make. Because it's a sauce, it can rapidly increase the saltiness of a dish where actual salt might take too long to dissolve or might spread unevenly through your cooking. A great trick to have up your sleeve when whatever you're cooking needs a big, quick hit of salty flavour.



SUMMER

Salads & Sides

Butter Bean & Basil Panzanella	5
Barley & Charred Corn Salad w/ Chimichurri	7
Rockmelon & Gorgonzola Salad	9
Tomato Carpaccio w/ Toasted Pistachios	11
Roasted Summer Vegetables w/ Mint & Hummus	13
Grilled Nectarine Salad w/ Chilli & Croûtons	15
Summer Sumac Fattoush	17
Peach, Tomato & Caper Salad	19
Pickled Rhubarb w/ Tomatoes, Zucchini & Basil	21
Snake Beans w/ Confit Garlic	23
Italian Warm Bean Salad	25

Mains

Spiced Couscous & Lentils w/ Caper Butter	29
Sweetcorn & Potato Hash	31
Potato Gnocchi w/ Cherry Tomato Sauce	33
Mint & Basil Pesto w/ Snake Beans	35
Roasted Tomato & Pesto Tart	37
Basil Pesto w/ Smoky Pickled Onion	39
Summer Couscous w/ Pickled Cucumber	41
Sweetcorn & Fennel Burgers	43
Creamy Summer Pasta	45
Mango & Avocado Soba Noodle Bowl	47
Wild Rice Summer Salad	49
Summer Berbere Curry	51

Sweets

Kefir & Apricot Ice Cream	55
Watermelon Eton Mess w/ Saffron & Lime	57
Zucchini & Rhubarb Cake w/ Cream Cheese Icing	59
Rhubarb, Lemon & Sage Ice Cream	61
Honey Glazed Apricots w/ Tahini Oat Crunch	63

AUTUMN

Salads & Sides

Golden Beetroot & Barley Salad	69
Bombay Potato Shells	71
Fig & Pecorino Salad	73
Spiced Pumpkin & Pomegranate Salad	75
Honeyed Parsnips w/ Hazelnuts & Pecorino	77
Butternut Salad w/ Sesame Ginger Dressing	79
Spiced Eggplant & Mint Salad w/ Goat's Cheese	81
Crispy Buckwheat Salad w/ Roast Pumpkin	83
Roast Beetroot & Stracciatella w/ White Beans	85
Warm Kale Salad w/ Shallots, Beetroot & Feta	87

Mains

Stuffed Baby Sweet Potatoes	91
Roasted Pumpkin w/ Chilli Yoghurt & Shallots	93
Five Cheese Fig Galette	95
Beetroot Fritters w/ Blue Cheese Aioli	97
Five Mushroom Carbonara w/ Swiss Cheese	99
Confit Garlic & Fried Potato Frittata	101
Roast Potato Salad w/ Fennel, Parsley & Chives	103
Butternut & Sage Pasta w/ Miso Breadcrumbs	105
Mushroom, Lentil & Haloumi Rice Bowl	107
Pumpkin & Silverbeet Spanakopita	109
Pumpkin Soup w/ Chilli Oil & Coriander	111
Eggplant Parmigiana	113
Autumn Linguine w/ Pumpkin, Sage & Squash	115

Sweets

Dutch Baby w/ Glazed Pears & Maple Syrup	119
Passionfruit Slice w/ Dark Chocolate	121
Browned Butter, Apple & Almond Loaf Cake	123
Salted Caramel Nut Pie	125
Pumpkin & Oat Loaf w/ Apricots & Walnuts	127
Apple, Blackcurrant & Caraway Seed Pie	129

WINTER

Salads & Sides

Avocado & Citrus Salad w/ Fennel & Ginger	135
Warm Mung Bean Salad w/ Peas & Mint	137
Buttery Carrots w/ Ginger & Kale	139
Butterbeans w/ Chilli, Garlic & Lemon	141
Green Salad w/ Toasted Almonds & Tahini	143
Pickled Cauliflower & Carrot Salad	145
Black Lentil & Roast Broccoli Salad	147
Saganaki w/ Lemon Drizzle	149
Caesar Salad w/ Croûtons & Brussels Sprouts	151
Crunchy Winter Salad w/ Garlic Croûtons	153

Mains

Slow-Cooked Broccoli Pasta w/ Za'atar	157
Leek & Potato Soup w/ Browned Butter & Garlic	159
Roasted Broccolini Pizza w/ Burrata	161
Nordic Stew w/ Winter Root Vegetables	163
White Bean & Potato Bake	165
Smoky Hotpot w/ Cabbage & Barley	167
Stale Bread & Cheese Pie	169
Creamy Risotto w/ Peas & Artichoke	171
Silverbeet, Potato & Feta Rolls	173
Brown Rice & Caramelised Shallot Tart	175
Roasted Allium Tart w/ Parmesan & Thyme	177

Sweets

Chocolate & Ginger Swirl Cake	181
Mandarin & Cinnamon Teacake	183
Ricotta & Almond Cake w/ Lemon Syrup	185
Spiced Citrus Baklava	187
Lime & Coconut Whipped Cream Pie	189
Nutmeg Scrolls w/ Lemon, Honey & Walnuts	191
Souffra w/ Winter Citrus Marmalade	193
Moroccan Spice Cake w/ Glazed Oranges	195

SPRING

Salads & Sides

Moroccan Cauliflower Salad w/ Tahini & Mint	201
Broad Bean Bruschetta w/ Mint & Peas	203
Carrot Ribbons w/ Honey Mustard Dressing	205
Crispy Tofu w/ Pickled Radishes	207
Baby Carrots w/ Parsley & Spices	209
Lemony Herb Salad w/ Capers & Avocado	211
Sicilian Salad w/ Pomegranate Jewels	213
Roasted Radishes w/ Parmesan & Mint	215
Smashed Potatoes w/ Asparagus & Hollandaise	217

Mains

Chickpea & Baby Potato Curry w/ Greens	221
Caramelised Onion & Fennel Tart w/ Blue Cheese	223
Linguine w/ Smoky Chickpeas & Bay Leaf Butter	225
Sweet Potato Patties w/ Garlic, Yoghurt & Lime	227
Pasta Salad w/ Caramelised Lemon & Artichokes	229
Quiche w/ Broccoli, Bay Leaves & Coriander	231
Springtime Broth	233
Creamy Springtime Penne w/ Coriander Oil	235
Spring Laksa w/ Chickpeas & Thai Basil	237
Asparagus & Olive Puff Pastry Bites	239
Fettuccine w/ Mizuna, Spring Onions & Chilli	241

Sweets

Salted Caramel & Strawberry Tarts	245
Fudgy Brownies w/ Mulberries & Macadamias	247
Strawberry & Honey Teacake	249
Sumac & Berry Upside Down Cake	251
Roasted Strawberries w/ White Chocolate	253
Banana Pie w/ Dark Chocolate & Flaky Salt	255
Kaffir Lime Cookies w/ White Chocolate	257

