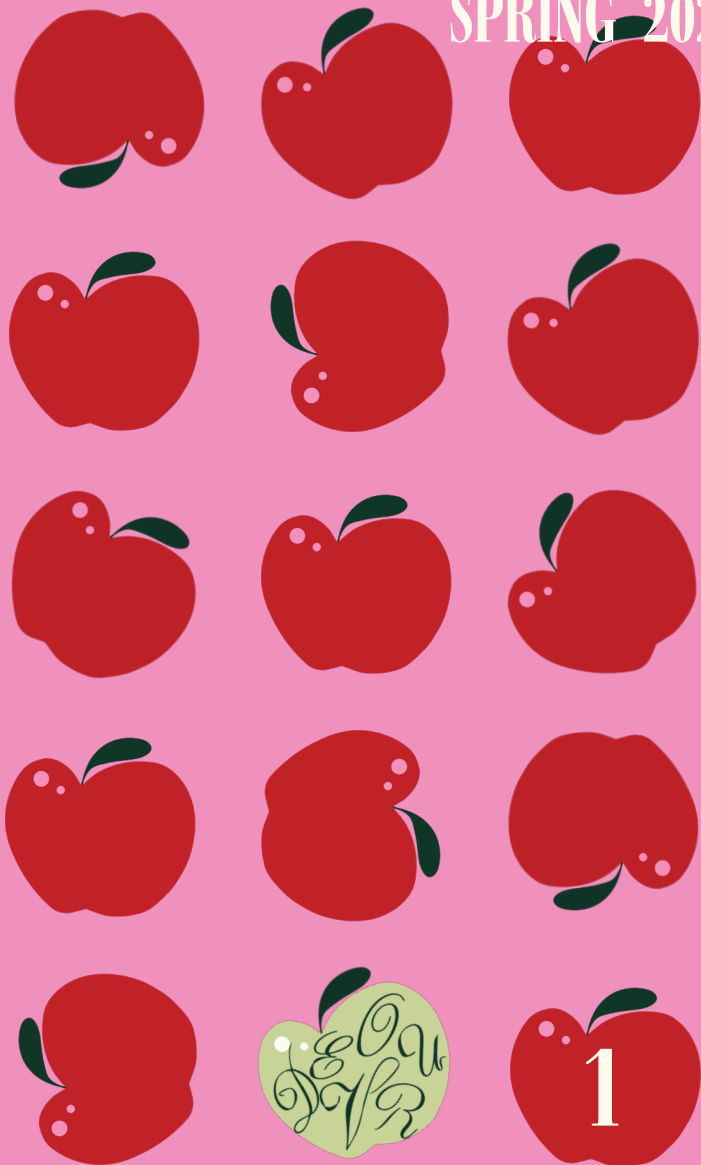


DEVOUR

SPRING 2025



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The DEVOUR Sticker Page





A Message From the Editor:

Our first issue introduces you to the world of DEVOUR through the nostalgic season of spring.

We celebrate the community that sharing recipes with those dear to us can create. *Evie Wilkins* shares her recipe for a 'Citrus Fennel Salad' and the memories it evokes. In 'The Power of Nostalgia: Scent and Sentimentality', *Tomasz Malinowski* explores the profound relationship between food, scent, and belonging, weaving together the intimate threads that bind memory, identity, and tradition.

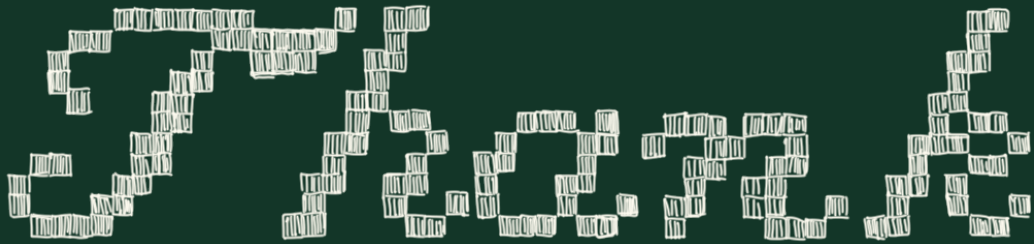
DEVOUR's mission is to reframe the culinary world through a feminist lens. Telling women to 'get in the kitchen' has long been an insult, but our approach to cooking and baking is constantly evolving. We aim to inspire you to cook with a heart for those around you. Experiences of femininity are diverse and cannot be tied neatly in a bow. Opinion pieces from *Layla Tyler*, *Loren Dutton*, *Divine-Favour Owoola* and *Lucy Gibson* each bring a unique perspective to the complex relationship between women and food.

Srionti Maitra reviews Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and its use of food as a device for forbidden love, family dynamics, caste, and postcolonial Indian society. For dessert, we feature an interview with an exceptional baker, Jess, the owner of *Madhouse Bakery* by *Erin-Cook Grant*.

I am grateful to all the amazing and wonderful contributors who shared their opinions, generational recipes, stories, and artwork for this issue — more about them on the next page.

Enjoy and DEVOUR!
Your editor,

Sharz Seka



Anise Love Thomas:

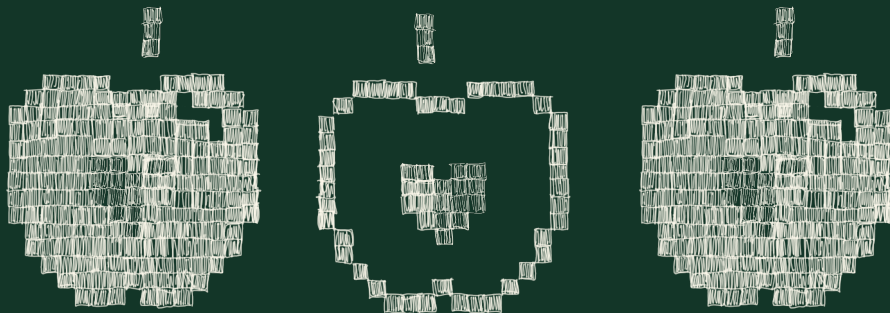
Anise is a versatile designer with a passion for illustration, editorial design and photography. Always eager to collaborate, they thrive on working with other talented creatives to bring bold ideas to life. The best way to contact them is on Instagram @altstardesigns

Divine-Favour Owoola:

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Dorcas Lim:

Dorcas is a graphic designer and creative with an interest in merging contrasting worlds and pushing for unique ideas. She thrives on exploring the intersections of different worlds, creating works that reflect the beauty of fusion. Find her on Instagram @emotionalsynthesis

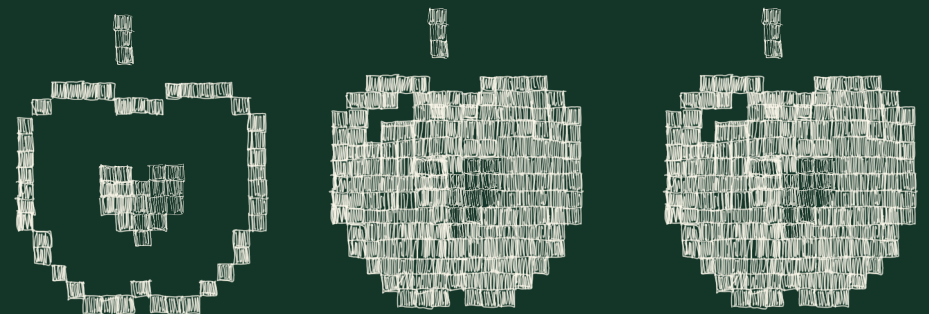


Erin Cook-Grant:

Erin is a film production student at UCA. In her free time, she loves to bake! She is a proud sapphic woman who loves feminism and Lego games! The best way to contact her is on Instagram @riddlersglasses or email: Riddlerlover06@gmail.com

Evie Wilkins:

Evie is a bespoke dressmaker and illustrator whose work is deeply inspired by girlhood and her journey navigating queerness. Graduating from UCA with a BA(Hons) in Fashion Atelier and Tailoring, her designs blend technical precision with intimate storytelling. When she's not sewing or sketching, Evie enjoys painting landscapes and cooking comforting meals to share with friends. Find her on Instagram @eviewilkinsatelier or contact her via email: wilkins.evelyn@gmail.com



More on the Next Page ...

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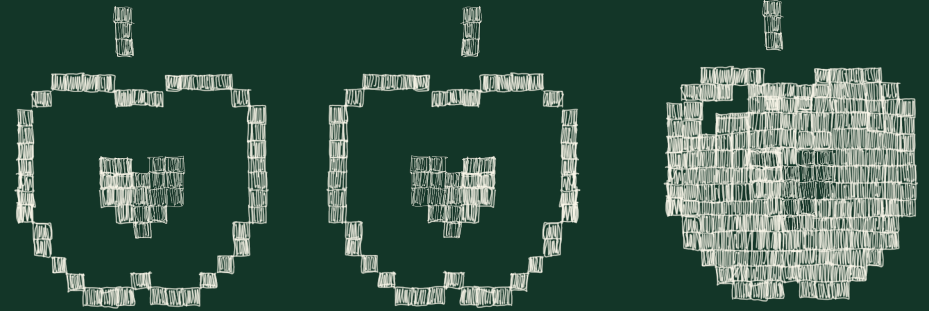
Layla is an aspiring journalist and writer who is driven by her love of learning and connecting with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. Specifically, she is interested in broadcast journalism but also enjoys writing. In her spare time, she likes reading, cooking and socialising with friends. The best way to contact her is via email: laylarxse2003@gmail.com

Loren Dutton:

Loren is a lifestyle writer with a love for storytelling and reporting on controversial topics, often providing a fresh perspective to popular discourses. Nutrition and cooking are personal interests of hers, and she loves finding new high-protein recipes to try. For future opportunities, please reach out via loren.dutton@icloud.com or her LinkedIn: Loren Dutton

Lucy Gibson:

Lucy is a Sheffield-based marketing assistant and freelance writer. She's passionate about food, culture, and contemporary women's writing, and loves exploring the intersections of both in her work, focusing on the significance of food and sex in contemporary women's literature in her master's dissertation. When she's not at her 9-5, she's seeking new writing opportunities and can be contacted via email: lucygibson17@outlook.com or her Instagram @lucyyygibson

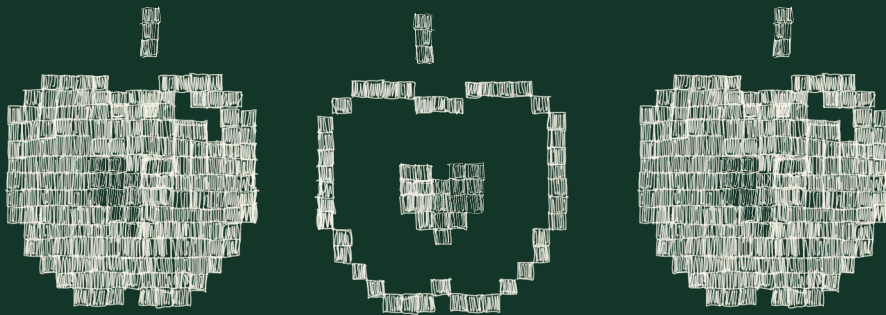
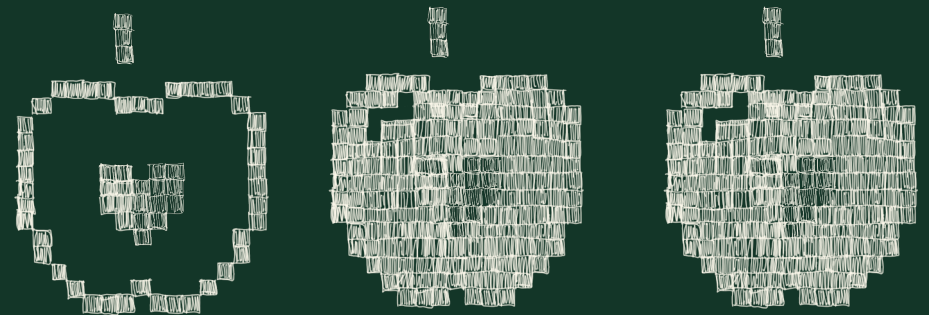


Srionti Maitra:

Srionti is a Bengali in London who nurtures her passion for all things food through recipe development, food writing, and elaborate meals for her perpetually stuffed friends. A book marketer by day, she can often be found fermenting things and stockpiling art supplies. Contact her at srionti.maitra@gmail.com

Tomasz Malinowski:

Tomasz is a fine artist and storyteller interested in exploring personal and heartfelt narratives through mixed media. If you wish to contact him, please message him through his Instagram page @tomaszartstuff



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Cooking Up Stereotypes:

Society's Concept of Women in the Kitchen

Layla Tyler

Within media and through history, women have always belonged in the kitchen. As a young woman myself, I think this perception is very outdated. I know women who excel in cooking but also others who despise it.

Throughout history women stereotyped as a housewife. This has changed in recent years due men and women swapping roles and being treated equally (to some extent).

What does this mean for the future concept that women should or shouldn't 'belong in the kitchen'?

There is a conservative saying that 'women make good cooks, but men make better chefs'. Within the culinary industry, there are more men than women working as professional chefs, this is astonishing and suggests that the culinary industry is very male dominated and needs to change.



How many famous chefs can you name that are women?
I'm assuming not many.

According to ONS, in the UK there is only 18.5% of over 250,000 professional chefs are women. Michelin Stars have only 10 of the 172 Michelin Star restaurants in the UK housing female head chefs. Pankaj Bhadouria was the first MasterChef winner in India, Brand Ambassador and TEDx speaker. In 2023 she stated, that within the food and beverage industry the professional kitchen has always remained the 'men's arena' whereas the kitchen at home says otherwise. The idea of women belonging in the kitchen has been challenged since



The Spare Rib Team in 1974.

the 1970's with Rosie Boycott and Marsha Rowe launching a feminist magazine called 'Spare Rib' in their 20's. In Boycott's childhood, she saw that her mother was university educated but was frustrated with being a housewife, who clearly didn't enjoy it as she lacked an interest

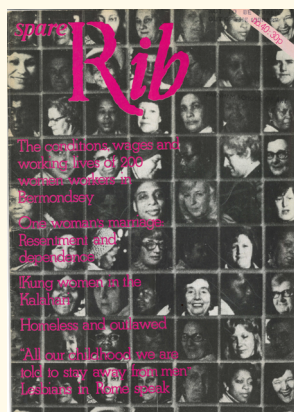
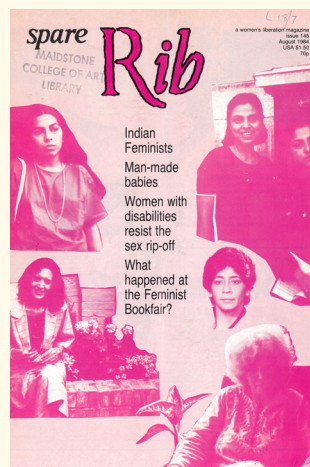
in cooking. This made Boycott believe that cooking was shameful for women who wanted to go out and work like men.

Spare Rib's aim was to have an unapologetic stance of feminism as it challenged the traditional depictions of femininity and the misconceptions of the women's movement.

The magazine was also aimed to help with women's self-esteem and make them feel part of a community where all women felt frustrated and miserable about their housewife lives.

Before this women were the housewives living in a man's world. Spare Rib was the start of changing norm and continues to be iconic today even though it ended in 1993. However, in 2007, Boycott wrote an article for the Guardian where she talked about how her point of view has changed. She felt she had gone too far with making women feel empowered outside of the kitchen, titling the piece 'Why a

Spare Rib Issue August 1984.



Spare Rib Issue March 1975.

Woman's Place is in the Kitchen'. Spare Rib is an inspiration but Devour is a magazine that will present this concept in a modernised way. That women can be empowered both inside and out of the kitchen. With society constantly changing, I believe that the way people look at how women and men are treated in the personal and professional kitchen will hopefully change. There will obviously be some people who will always have their traditional and stereotypical point of views but as a society, the way women are treated compared to men will change in a positive way.

Citrus Fennel Salad Recipe

Ernie Wilkins

Graphics by Dorcas Lim



This citrus fennel salad is for sharing and reminds me of peeling oranges for friends on the school playground. It calls back to those feelings of nostalgia, girlhood and community.

Ingredients

Serves 4

1 Fennel Bulb
1 Large Orange
1 Blood Orange (can be substituted for another large orange)
½ Red Onion
30 g of Rocket
100 g of Crumbled Feta
10g torn mint leaves (optional)

For the Citrus Vinaigrette:

3 tbsps Extra Virgin Olive Oil
2 tbsps Red Wine Vinegar
2 tbsps Lime Juice (can be substituted for lemon)
Zest of One Lime (lime adds a nice colour contrast)
1 tsp Dijon Mustard
1 Garlic Clove (finely minced)
1 tbsp of Honey or Agave Syrup
Salt & Black Pepper to Season



METHOD ON NEXT PAGE

Method

Making the Dressing:

Measure the vinaigrette ingredients into your salad bowl of choice.

Whisk the ingredients until the dressing emulsifies, becoming lighter in colour and having a slightly creamier texture.

Preparing the Salad Ingredients:

Cut off the bottom of the fennel, trim the fronds, then cut in half lengthwise.

Use a mandolin or a sharp knife to thinly slice the fennel. Repeat this process for the red onion.

Using a paring knife, slice the stem ends off the oranges.

Place on the counter, and remove the orange peel, cutting downwards in strips.

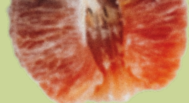
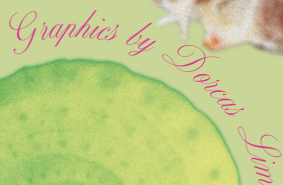
Either slice the orange into segments by cutting each segment out of the membrane, or slice into thin rounds.

Combining and Plating:

Toss the rocket, fennel and onion in the bowl with dressing, mixing to combine.

Then arrange the orange and blood orange.

Sprinkle the crumbled feta and torn mint leaves over the salad to complete the dish.



The Problem with 'Girl Dinner'

Loren Dutton

It began innocently enough with a platter of cheese cubes, crackers, olives, and cucumber, paired with a glass of wine. It was 'Girl Dinner', thrown-together snack plates shared by TikTok creators as a carefree alternative to a traditional meal. But beneath the viral videos of aesthetically presented plates lies a more troubling narrative, one that turns women's relationships with food into a joke, glorifies disordered eating patterns, and ultimately infantilises the act of feeding oneself.

The trend, which gained popularity in late 2023, was initially presented as a light-hearted glimpse into how many women (particularly young women) eat when no one is watching. As is typical with social media content today, over time, the videos leaned further into extremes as more creators joined in. Dinners of Diet Coke and a pickle, or just a few grapes and a bite of cheese, were labelled as relatable. The message was clear: women don't eat real meals, they nibble, they snack, they starve - prettily.

At first glance, "Girl Dinner" might seem empowering. It allowed women to reclaim their eating habits outside the structure of traditional meals and opened up conversations about how eating looks different to everyone. But

Illustration by Anise Love Thomas





to look at this trend more intently, we find a reinforcement of longstanding stereotypes, including the idea that women should be dainty, ladylike, and unindulgent. The infantilisation of women is woven into the wording of the trend itself. The term 'girl dinner' is telling. In labelling these meals as 'girl' dinners, the trend subtly promotes a regression, a return to a childlike state where responsibilities such as nutrition are optional, and food is more about aesthetics than sustenance.

'Girl Dinner' mirrors and even romanticises the behaviours associated with disordered eating. Social media has been flooded with thin, white influencers showing off tiny meals under the 'girl dinner' hashtag, reinforcing dangerous beauty ideals under the guise of relatability. There are currently over 330,000 videos under the hashtag 'girldinner', and one video in particular has over 20 million views. For those recovering from eating disorders or navigating complicated relationships with food, this kind of content plastered all over their algorithm-generated feed can be deeply triggering.

It's important to remember, there's nothing wrong with a snack plate. But when we celebrate this as a standard and label it a girl's approach to dinner, we reinforce a deeper, more damaging message: that women should eat less and be small. Your meal does not have to be minimalistic to be socially acceptable.

Instead of 'Girl Dinner,' what if we celebrated women's nourishment? What if we spotlighted the joy of cooking for one, the power of feeding ourselves intentionally, and the beauty of meals that truly satisfy? Because there is nothing light-hearted about food, and nothing childish about a woman who knows how to nourish herself.

Slut's Spaghetti



Lucy Gibson

I find it apt that the first time I learnt how to cook 'Slut's Spaghetti' was in a Nigella Cookbook.

This dish, a playful take on what is traditionally known as 'Spaghetti alla Puttanesca', gets its less PG name from being considered what 'slatterns' would often cook. Slatterns being those who don't dabble in farmers market fresh ingredients and instead revel in the beauty of the tinned and/or jarred variety. Another explanation says that it's what ladies of the night would make, placing it outside their windows to entice paying customers.

From what I understand, Nigella has since changed the name of this dish to 'Slatterns Spaghetti' highlighting how whatever the name might be, or might suggest, this dish remains one of ease and deliciously savoury flavours. I tend to agree, however, upon finding myself having to tempt friends into allowing me to cook this for them (it's usually the mention of anchovies), I have found myself on several occasions unable to describe it as anything but a dish that is just quite simply 'slutty'.

There is something about the combination of the sheer saltiness, of what I believe to be quite simply one of the filthiest trios, of capers, anchovies and olives bathed in a rich tomatoey sauce and cut through with fresh, fragrant parsley that just tastes so decadent and naughty. Served with a few slices of that cheap, frozen garlic bread you get in



*'Slattern's Spaghetti' in
Nigella's Book*



supermarkets and that oozes bad breath, this dish demands to be enjoyed, again and again by anyone and everyone and whilst wearing nothing but a set of lacey black underwear.

At the same time this dish is one of sheer simplicity. Made with little ingredients, this recipe has taught me the value of how simple ingredients, when paired well, can really pack a punch. There is a distinct duality to this dish, where simplicity meets deep salty, umami richness, that makes it what it is. It is however, interesting to unpack why it is the name 'Slut's Spaghetti' just seems to sit with me and work so well.

What does it mean to have 'slutty' food?

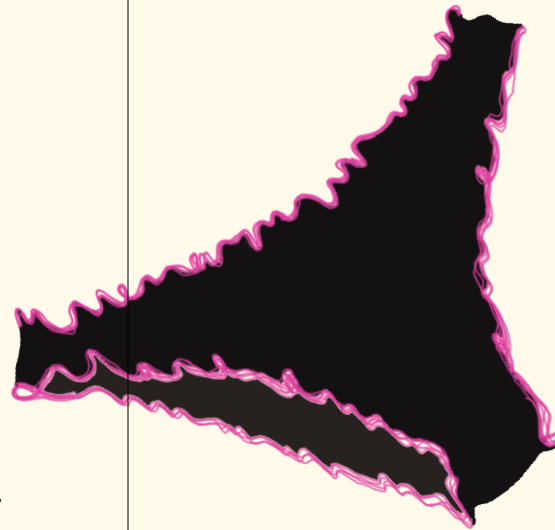
Alas, I think Nigella was on to something.

The name 'Slut's Spaghetti' is enticing and playful. The alliteration drawing us in, the sexy sibilance really playing and drawing further attention to the word 'slut'. It suggests that our experience of food should be indulgent and steeped in promiscuity. Sure, taking the time to enjoy different recipes and choosing to indulge and develop our relationships to food and cooking in the midst of diet culture reels and frequently swallowed appetites, feels like something of a dirty little secret to me.

What better challenges us to indulge our appetite than a dish that oozes salty, briny flavours, and that is above all just simply, a little slutty.

I think the word slut perhaps carries less culturally demeaning weight in 2025 than it has done. With many women beginning to reclaim the word, using it in similarly playful ways to what we find Nigella doing here.

In this context, it helps us to uncover the playful sensual nature that ultimately underpins cooking and food. Encouraging us to reimagine what it means to enjoy a dish whilst also painting it with a little naughtiness and decadence too.



If you do make this dish, and I really hope you do, I invite you to indulge your appetite, taking the time to bathe in the sheer duality of simplicity and richness that defines it. Be a little slutty. Cook it for all the boys and girls you know whilst prancing about your kitchen in your sexiest pair of undies.

If you don't make this dish, (alas, the anchovies might not be for you), I invite you think about what recipes you know that encourage you to embody this same sluttiness. Recipes that encourage you to revel in delicious flavours. Savoury or sweet (I have since decided that millionaire's shortbread deserves to be in the slutty category), I hope you find your slutty menu.

RECIPE ON NEXT PAGE

Illustrations by Sarah Sola



Ingredients

For the Sauce:

2tbsps Capers

A handful of Halved Black Olives

1 tin of Anchovies (a whole one of the small tins that they often come in)

1 tin Chopped tomatoes (1 tin)

2-3 Garlic Cloves (finely chopped)

Fresh parsley

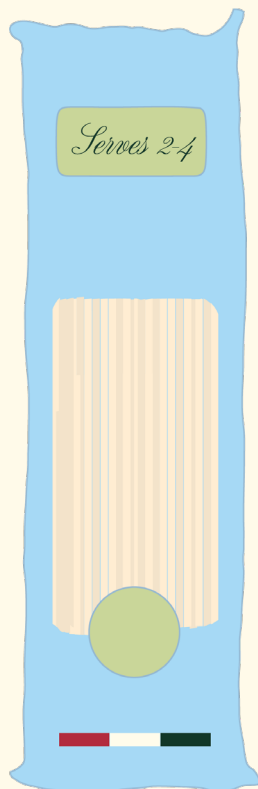
Salt & Pepper to Taste

A pinch of Chilli Flakes

Spaghetti (dependant on how many you're cooking for, just however much you fancy)

To Serve:

Garlic bread (the cheap kind with the frozen margariney middle you can get in most UK supermarkets) and if you have it, a little grating of parmesan.



Method

Pop your pasta into a pot of salted boiling water.

Making the Sauce:

Put your anchovies, oil and all, into a large deep frying pan and turn on the heat.

Begin to cook the anchovies, mashing them with the side of your spoon as they cook.

They should soon begin to melt into somewhat of a paste.

When this happens, pop in your garlic and cook for a further 2-3 mins before adding in your chopped tomatoes.

Give this a mix and turn down the heat a little, continue to simmer for 3-4 mins as you season with salt, pepper and a good pinch of chilli flakes.

After this, add in your capers and olives and stir well.

Whilst you wait for your pasta to finish, turn down the heat and continue to simmer the sauce.

Chop up your parsley.

Drain your pasta, saving a little of the water.

Combining and Plating:

Using a pair of tongs, coat your pasta in the sauce, adding in a little of the pasta water to help coat the spaghetti.

Stir through half of your fresh parsley and begin to plate.

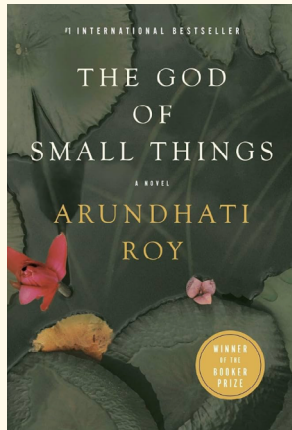
Once plated, garnish with the rest of the parsley, pepper and a few extra chilli flakes before tucking in.



Handful/Heart Full/Mouthful:

Food as a Literary Device in *The God of Small Things*

Prionti Maitra



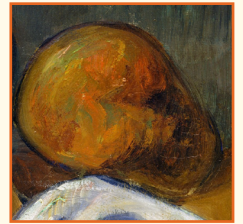
Food serves literature as the physical and social metronome structuring our lives. It acts as the in-between event of digesting change, and as a vital witness to survival through suffering. Readers of sense-led fiction will note how effective the act of eating is at communicating a gamut of experiences from inconvenience through to trauma – we all understand pleasure, hunger and nausea.

One of my favourite novels is Arundhati Roy's Booker-winning *The God of Small Things*.

Through memories etched in taste and smell, the author unpacks the personal histories of her characters, following three generations of a family in Kerala from the 60s to the 90s. For Roy, food and the motif of the meal is a powerful medium to communicate life and trauma, which is, in her words, like **'a mango hair caught between molars [...] cannot be worried loose'**.

The paraliptical plot of the novel hinges on the murder of Velutha, a carpenter who belongs to a community considered 'untouchable' under the oppressive and entrenched caste system that plagues India to this day. Inter-caste animosity abounds in the novel, encoded in the name 'Rice-Christians', a term first used in the late 1600s to describe those perceived as converting for alms of rice, not through successful evangelisation.

Food as influencing personhood is taken a step further by its union with the body – Roy employs such tactile detail that her reader can almost taste the character's lives: skin stretches from a politico's bones willingly, **'like chewing gum'**, his voice **'like sugarcane stripped of its bark, frayed and fibrous'**. A great-aunt's failing eyes spread as though **'butter behind her thick glasses'**.



Repeatedly, the language of patriarchal consumption finds its way towards the bodies of women and children, which are described as though fruiting: a police officer taps a woman's breasts with his baton like he is at the market, **'choosing mangoes'**.

In innocent contrast, the book's opening sees harvest abundance splash across the discourse, where 'red bananas ripen' and 'jackfruits burst' in May's 'immodest green' countryside.

The home of Velutha, the novel's tragic scapegoat, enshrines the same archetypal beauty in sepia-toned meal vignettes shared with the novel's child protagonists:

'His house (on a good day) smelled of fresh wood shavings and the sun. Of red fish curry cooked with black tamarind. The best fish curry, according to Estha, in the whole world.' - *The God of Small Things*, page 79

Food accompanies the characters in stillness (sullen meals where families pick at fish bones), in celebration (elaborate cakes to welcome a favoured grand-niece) and in departure. A recurrent element of the plot is young Estha's separation from his twin and mother on a cross-country journey toward his alcoholic father. Estha carries a tomato sandwich tiffin. Multiple interpretations of this scene arise through interaction with the meal motif: his mother's handmade tiffin acts as a maternal talisman against the foreignness of Bengal. Notions arise of this being Estha's last meal, as in a criminal conviction. His twin Rahel is able, at the time, to taste the misery of a tomato sandwich she did not eat. The reader finds Roy tweaking a lifelike instance where meals enrich a collective memory into something microcosmic and surreal.

Surrealism notwithstanding, the postcolonial, gendered context of the

meal is crucial to several episodes, where food acts as a barometer. When a British relative and her half-Indian daughter visit, their water is boiled separately, while everyone else drinks tap water, bristling. Cruel hierarchies reveal themselves at mealtimes across the village.

The family pickle business, started by the matriarch Kochamma, suffers her husband's derision and her son Chacko's ill-advised avarice but persists nonetheless. The Paradise Pickles and Preserves factory serves as a liminal space between the house and river, as a site of decision, of memory, as a bastion standing between the past and present. It is a place of beginnings for the family, where oil spills, spices fly, and produce is crushed into jams and jellies. Its cauldrons hide secrets for the children, and its economic trajectory reveals worthiness. A legal loophole disinheriting his sister enables Chacko to attempt becoming a Pickle Baron, and his deficient Marxism is laid bare as he flirts with factory workers, selling the family's rice paddies to fund a loan for equipment as his mother's recipes and legacy leak from poorly sealed jars.

Food forms the backdrop not just to life, but also to death: Chacko's daughter Sophie is found drowned in a swollen river only after it is noticed that her morning glass of milk remains undrained. Her mother laments that there will be no single egg to cook in the mornings. This tender observation – loss in the absence of a place setting – cuts deeper than tears.



Still Life by Paul Gauguin via Met Museum.

The author shuns essentialist, linear use of culinary motifs; the language of food strips away frothy exoticism, grounding readers indelibly in each character's memories, and in the author's gallows humour: **'freshly baked, iced' houses cover up the neighbourhood's history, each built with money sent home by toiling immigrants. The 'meat-smell of blood money' suffuses the butcher's shop.**

The mundane physicality of spaces in the novel is intensified by a delightful glut of edible impressions: a cinema is a cave of 'fan-whirring, peanut-crunching darkness'. In a doctor's office, a **'slow ceiling fan sliced the thick, frightened air into an unending spiral [...] like the peeled skin of an endless potato'**. An aged aunt's saccharine, stifling violin performance to welcome guests is **'melted brown [...] chocolate waves on a chocolate shore'**.

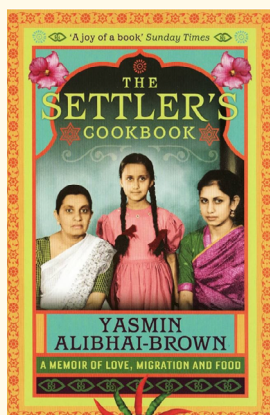
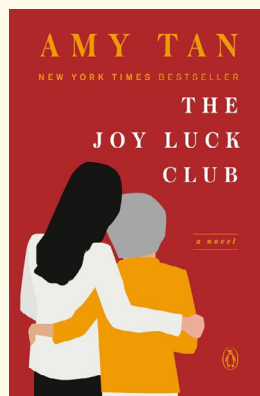
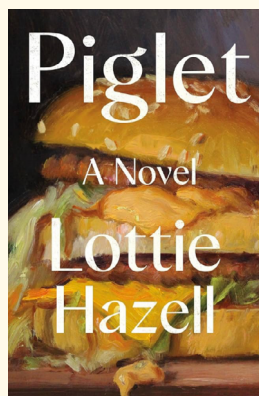
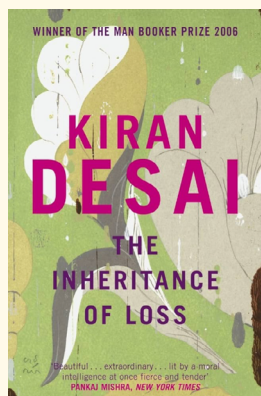
Food symbols ripen as harbingers throughout the novel, as they do in so much literature – in Persephone's pomegranate, in Elio's peach, or in the sinful window of a chocolaterie in Joanne Harris. Ammu, suffocated by her aimless existence, finds an element of danger in listening to her tangerine-shaped transistor radio by the river, the ersatz orange representing her transcendence. For her son Estha, the trauma of a childhood assault turns oranges to poison

apples, while Ammu's orange is a forbidden fruit. This pulsing growth on the Kobe tree eventually leads her to a riverside tryst, and her lover to his death.

So why read a book that pulls so few punches? We live in an online climate hostile toward South Asians, where the politics of food and smell churn despite the near-universal love of our subcontinental cuisines, and alongside mutating nationalism in India. This book, cutting to the sinew of both language and human nature, rejects palatable stereotypes of the exotic, of **'mangoes, mothers and monsoons'** often sneered at in diasporic literature. *The God of Small Things* gives us cross-generational, sense-led demonstrations of food as cultural capital. Read for simmering rage at norms and hierarchy, for compassion toward the body's secrets and its fervent hungers. Read for a literary experience that burns itself into your tongue.

More recommended reading for those who

DEVOUR books:



The Power of Nostalgia:

Tomasz Malinowski

A Note from the editor: From the quiet embarrassment of childhood to the inheritance of love through food, the story captures the enduring power of familial rituals. With introspection, Tomasz invites us to reflect on how the simplest scents and flavours carry the weight of nostalgia, grief, and home.

My fingers ran along the rough edges of the plastic chair that held my weight beneath me. In front of me, on the shiny wooden table, lay a worksheet. At this point in the Year Two curriculum, we were learning about our five different senses. We had been tasked with writing down our favourite scents and describing why we liked them. Others took their turn sharing what they had written.

"Grass!"

"Flowers!"

My heart started to race as they got around to our table. My cheeks burned when all eyes were on me, my go. "M-my...my favourite smell is when my mummy is frying onions in the kitchen". I sat there frozen, a six-year-old flooded by a wave of self-aware pity and embarrassment. Unrelenting, it coursed through my body and poked out its ugly head in the form of hot tears prickling at the corners of my eyes. I felt like I had misunderstood the task.

It was a familiar feeling to me, a feeling I struggled to separate from myself even in adulthood. Why must my answer have been so savoury? So earnest? So masculine? I should have just said what everyone else had said. I should have been delicate, feminine, quiet, and lovable. But no, I was a Slavic boy through and through. Butter and borsch ran through my veins. There was no escaping the comfortably suffocating



grip food, scent, and sentimentality had and continue to have on me. At three or four in the morning, we would land in Wrocław, Poland, the motherland. We would hail a taxi, or my uncle Paweł would pick us up from the airport and take us to my Babcia's flat, the same flat my mother and her siblings grew up in.

A cold, grey, concrete structure that held love and light in its walls. Bay leaves and beetroot was the scent that would hit my nose as I stepped through the threshold of my grandmother's apartment. Ushering us around her small table in the kitchen, we would perch on creaking chairs around it. Its surface was crowded with bowls of tomato soup, pasta, pork cutlets, and pickles. My eyes would flit over to the lace-covered window and see the darkness of the night peeking through the white of the curtain. Time didn't seem to play a factor in the way my grandmother loved us through food.

Years later, after my mother passed away, I began to notice that my mum had learned to do the same. A ritual of care that had been ingrained into her. When I left early for a school trip, she would wake up extra early to prepare something special to fill my stomach and fuel my excitement. In fact, I wasn't allowed to leave home until I'd eaten a full meal. When I did even mildly well in an exam, I would come home to find my favourite chocolate bar on my pillow. On my birthday, she would ask me for my request for a homemade birthday dinner. The answer was almost always pasta bake.

"What type of cake should I make for your special day?"

In the aftermath of my mother's death, I found her notebooks where she collected and noted down her recipes. Having been raised as the only female sibling, I felt a pleasant pressure, a knowable responsibility bestowed upon me to inhabit and practice the same maternal culinary magic that my mother and my grandmother had before her. I wondered how far this went back in my family. Will I pass this on to my children? I hope so.

The bright light of this honour shines brightest when I cook for my brothers. Nothing will ever compare to seeing the weight of life lift from their shoulders as they smell familiar scents of soup and subconsciously recall bittersweet memories. I hope that through the magic of food, I can remind them that hope and home are not lost.

Pounded Yam:

Expressing Identity Through Food

Divine-Favour Owoola

Pounded Yam is a comfort meal. A meal that is filling, tasty and rich with flavour. It's a symbol of my community. My sister gave me the recipe for the fish soup to eat with it, and my mum gave me the okra to pair with it.

Ingredients

Pounded Yam Flour - the brand used in this recipe is Olu-Olu
Water

Like most ancestral recipes, pounded yam isn't measured, but the ratio of water to yam is roughly 5:3 parts if eyeballing a recipe isn't for you.



Method

First, a good choice of pounded yam flour brand used in this recipe is called Olu-Olu. The choice of spoon to pound the flour is important, and will make the process easier. An omorogun, which means turning stick in Yoruba, is the perfect option.

Preparing the Water:

Get a pot and add the water, then wait for it to boil.

Making the Pounded Yam:

Slowly pour in the yam flour.

Stir the flour gently until it starts to thicken up.



A spoon used as an omorogun

Keep pounding until it's smooth.

More water or more flour can be added to change the consistency.

The amount of water will change the texture of the pounded yam, making it softer.

Pairing and Plating:

Once finished, dish up the pounded yam and wrap any spare pounded yam in cling film.

I ate the pounded yam with some okra and fish soup. However, you can eat pounded yam with different soups. Traditional Nigerian soups for pounded yam include egusi, efo riro and ila alaasepo.



*Nigerian Women: Strength in Culture,
Grace in Adversity*

Pounded yam makes me think about my identity and culture. I'm proud to be Nigerian. It highlights the intersectionality that comes with being black but also a woman.

Making pounded yam is a tough process. As the name suggests, you have to pound the yam. It's not an activity that you can look 'pretty' doing or that fits into the cooking aesthetics that are popular today. It's hard, it requires strength and skill. This dish reinforces that cooking is a skill; it's a technique that I'm still trying to develop. It's ironic to me because within society, a common rhetoric is that cooking is something you'll naturally be good at as a woman.

But for me it's not. Not knowing how to cook has made me reconsider gender stereotypes. As I'm learning how to cook, I'm not doing it to be more 'feminine' or for a husband. I'm doing it to improve my skills. For me, cooking is a skill that is hard yet rewarding. I'm also aware of my

privilege to be able to challenge this stereotype.

I have the freedom to slowly learn how to cook and do it for myself. A lot of women, both in the West and in Nigeria, are limited to domestic chores and childcare. Nigeria specifically has an issue of forcing women into domestic servitude through gender based violence. Numerous Nigerian news articles have detailed attacks on women. In 2023, an article in The Punch, a daily newspaper in Nigeria, detailed the murder of a woman over a cooking argument by her husband. Nigerian Correspondent for the Guardian, Eromo Egbejule, reported that across Nigeria, two dozen women have died as a result of gender-based violence in 2025. There can be both oppression and empowerment in cooking.

There are more layers when it comes to food and the preparation of food. There's a lot of politics, history and context when it comes to cooking. Nevertheless, as I'm improving my cooking skills in cooking, I'm empowering myself, learning more about my culture and educating people on gender-based violence in Nigeria. While cooking and food are inherently political and traditional gender roles can contribute to oppression, they can also provide people with the power to resist and take pride in their culture and abilities.



Sugar, Spice, and Strength:

How Madhouse Bakeshop Embodies Feminine Creativity and Power

Erin Cook-Grant

Madhouse Bakeshop isn't just about sweets - it's a celebration of creativity, passion, and bold femininity. Formerly known as Mad Batter Cupcakes and Cakes, this Toronto-based bakery is known for its signature Cookie Sammies, custom cakes, and indulgent treats that blend artistry with flavour.

With a strong presence in the local dessert scene and collaborations with brands like Good Behaviour, Madhouse Bakeshop is redefining modern baking.

More than just a business, it's a space where tradition meets innovation, proving that femininity in the kitchen is not just about nostalgia – it's about power, resilience, and fearless self-expression.

Erin and the owner of the bakery, Jess, sat down for an interview about her growing business.



Jess, the owner of Madhouse Bakeshop.

Erin: Madhouse Bakeshop has a strong, creative identity. How does femininity influence your brand, from the name to the aesthetics of your products?

Jess: With the brand, I try to separate myself from the business; sometimes, the two mesh as the business is like my child.

I created it, and it is an extension of me and what I like. As much as I try to advocate for equality and women in business, I feel like with the brand and products, I don't think femininity plays a role in it. I think it's more about the brand itself. It doesn't have to do with gender.

With food, it's more seasonality and creative ideas, less so gender.

E: Baking has long been associated with femininity and home traditions. How do you balance honouring

that legacy while also modernizing and innovating?

J: It's so true. I don't associate myself with being a baker as much as I do with being a business owner.

'When someone says, 'Oh, you're a baker,' I reply, 'Yes, I am, and proudly so, but more than that, I am a business owner; I am an entrepreneur.'

I try and break that mould. It bothers me that women are seen as just household providers; they do so much in the household.

When it comes to baking, I see it as running a machine and a business; I embody more boss energy than I do as a homemaker.

Running the business and portraying the image I want to show is baked, but I want it to look and feel presentable, and I want the brand to

grow in that direction.

I don't want it to look cookie-cutter. People have a misconception of homegrown and homemade, so I try to get away from that stigma, think of myself as the boss, and have that mindset. And it shows with my business!

E: Are there any women in your life or the baking industry who have inspired your approach to creating beautiful and delicious treats while building your business?

J: My background is Italian, half Italian, and half Ukrainian. My Nona (her grandmother) was always cooking, which is huge in Italian culture. She was huge on cookies, biscotti, etc.

She was always in the kitchen. And I think it's funny now that I've gone into this profession. I didn't do it to honour her, but

it is something that is close to her and something that she was passionate about when she was alive.

My mum and both my parents are so supportive. My mother can paint; she's artistic in that way. While I can't draw, it's interesting to see my art come out through cake!

People ask how you can bake cakes and not draw, and I don't know! It's beautiful that art is portrayed in all these different ways.

Regarding business, I think of myself as my muse. Of course, the CEO of Sprinkles is very inspirational. She has a similar story; she was in the corporate world and quit her job at 25, and her company blew up! And I thought, if they, why not me?

But I try to think of what I want and be my inspiration.



One of Madhouse's Cakes.

E: As a woman in the baking and business world, have you faced any unique challenges, and how have you navigated them?

J: There are obviously ups and downs in the business world in general, but I wouldn't say any unique challenges. I try to have that boss mentality, and that helps me do things.

I have never faced any disrespect for being a small business owner. I think, in some ways, you find people and other small businesses who are

willing to help you and help you grow!

For now, there are not many unique challenges. I keep myself and the business separate by not posting myself often online. I don't want it to be about me, my look, or my personality; I want to keep it on the products.

However, in today's social world, people need a personality behind the products, so that is something I am working on and trying to include myself and my

personality more.

E: How do you cultivate a sense of community and connection through Madhouse Bakeshop?

J: I started a program within my business where I had taste testers. Whenever I had new products or extras, the first three people to email back would get the testers for free, and it would generate a lot of buzz.



However, this isn't something we do all the time, as I give a lot to friends and use a lot for content. I could do a better job of engaging with a community.

When I've grown more, it will be much easier to foster my community within the business world; I make polls and interactive posts. It's hard to balance. You want to sell but don't want to feel like you are pushing in a negative way to sell.

E: What advice would you give young women who dream of starting their own bakery or creative business?

J: There are a couple of quotes that I would apply here, one of which I used for my yearbook quote in high school: 'Be fearless in the pursuit of what sets your soul on fire.' It's true! The point of life and your journey fulfil you and keep you going.

Life has so many ups and downs, but they are worth going through.

'Feel the fear, but do it anyway.'

We hear about imposter syndrome and things like that; there are great ways to make excuses, but it's hard to start.

My advice would be to start. Learn about it, do it, and practice it. I'm still growing and learning; it's just about being consistent and not giving up. I started the business during COVID-19; so many blew up way past mine, and so many stopped. But that never stopped me from continuing. Your time will come just like everyone else's time came.

To the left, one of Madhouse's tiered cakes.



Madhouse's signature 'cookie sammies'.



E: What does the future of Madhouse Bakeshop look like, and how do you hope to inspire the next generation of women entrepreneurs?

J: This is the year of growth; I'm looking to expand. I also have more exposure on social media with people in the store. Whether that be more pop-ups or better businesses, some more popular areas, etc, or if that be a storefront. I'm looking for a space to have

a better sense of community so people can come in and have the experience, and I think that will lend more to the brand. And I love meeting customers!

So maybe a store, but at the very least, expanding operations. I've always seen myself helping other entrepreneurs, acting like an incubator for businesses. Someone comes to me with a business idea, and I help them get the grants and investors and find the path to

making their dream a success. When I crack the key to my own success, I would love to help others succeed.

'That would be very fulfilling and something that sounds fun to me!'

TIRAMISU

Shaz Seka

This is my take on the timeless classic, tiramisu. There's something about coffee's warmth, chocolate's depth, and vanilla's gentle sweetness that I love. It's a dessert I turn to often, especially for birthdays and special moments shared with loved ones. Tiramisu has become a little tradition of mine, and I hope this version brings a bit of that joy – and a touch of sweetness – to your table, too.



Ingredients

4 tubs mascarpone cheese
2 packets of sponge fingers
4 eggs – separated
240g caster sugar
1 teaspoon of vanilla essence
1 bar of dark chocolate
1 Tablespoon of coffee
1 pint of milk (can be substituted with plant-based milk)

Optional:

A few shots of an alcohol of your choice: Brandy, whisky, Tia Maria, Bailey's, etc.
An electric whisk will make this easier unless you want an arm workout.

Serves 4-6

Method

Making the coffee mixture:

Add some hot water to dissolve your coffee.

Mix milk and coffee (add the alcohol if you use it).

Making the mascarpone cream mixture:

Whisk egg whites until stiff.

Add each tub of mascarpone cheese to the sugar and vanilla essence and whisk well.

Fold in egg whites.

Layer the tiramisu:

Dip each sponge finger into the milk mixture; hold each finger in the milk for a few seconds so they are well soaked.

Put a layer of soaked sponge fingers in the dish.

Now add a layer of the mascarpone cream mixture to the sponge fingers.

Put another layer of soaked fingers.

Repeat the layering process until the dish is filled; make sure a cream layer is your last layer.

To decorate:

Grate the dark chocolate over the top to finish.

Keep Refrigerated

