

**“A passionate love letter to
London and how it’s become
the most diverse, delicious and
interesting city in the world.”**

Gizzi Erskine

MADE IN LONDON

THE COOKBOOK

Leah Hyslop

A B S O L U T E P R E S S

**MADE IN
LONDON**

For Craig,
who washes everything up

MADE IN LONDON

THE COOKBOOK

Leah Hyslop

A.

**FOOD AND
DRINK RUNS
THROUGH
LONDON'S
HISTORY
LIKE THE
THAMES.**



 INTRODUCTION 8

 LON-DINNER 138

  LATE-NIGHT LONDON 232

 CAPITAL DRINKS 260

20 BREAKFAST & BRUNCH 

58 STARTERS & SMALL PLATES 

102 AFTERNOON TEA  

196 PUDDING 

296 BIBLIOGRAPHY & INDEX 

INTRODUCTION



**'THE MAN WHO CAN DOMINATE
A LONDON DINNER TABLE CAN
DOMINATE THE WORLD.'**

OSCAR WILDE

London is a greedy city.

Take a walk through the bustling West End, in the heart of the capital, and a world of food swallows you up. The waft of vinegar and batter from fish and chip shops; the sizzle of burgers at a street food van; the cries of the hustling curry house owner, urging you to 'Come in, come in, best balti in town'. With more than 7,000 restaurants in the capital, Londoners could conceivably eat at a different place for every single meal for seven years, without ever having to make a repeat visit. Food is even written into the geography: a quick glance at a London A–Z reveals a feast of streets, from Bread Street and Saffron Hill to Fish Street and Honey Lane, all named for the foods once hawked on their cobbles.

I was born in London. One of my earliest memories is of sitting on the muddy foreshore of the Thames at Greenwich, covering my face with a Mr Whippy ice cream as boats sailed by. My family eventually moved to Kent, and when I returned to London as a young graduate, with few friends and even fewer pennies in my pocket, the city seemed vast and unnavigable. Food was how I found my feet. Hopping on the tube on a Saturday morning to visit Borough Market; pressing my nose up against the windows of iconic restaurants like The Ivy; detouring to famous bakeries on the way home from work to buy a loaf was how I learnt the map of the city, and how I came to feel at home here. I made new friends in old pubs, and filled my tiny kitchen with jams and cheeses from the brilliant London producers I discovered on every corner. My love affair with London's food coincided with a decade in which its reputation as a gourmand's paradise exploded. New Yorkers might disagree, but I truly believe that, right now, London is the world's leading culinary destination.

Unlike many capital cities, it's hard to identify a single food, or cuisine, that defines London. The map of Rome is one of pizza and pasta joints; in Paris, cassoulet or steak frites are as much a part of the city's foundations as the creepy catacombs. There are London institutions, to be sure: the old-fashioned pie and mash shops, or the swanky hotels offering afternoon tea. But London's huge, diverse immigrant population means the city has always cherry-picked its food from the best of world cuisine. Walk into a London restaurant and you might end up ordering beef reared on heathered English hills, but roasted with Middle Eastern spices, or a fillet of Scottish salmon, cooked just the way the Spanish chef's mother taught him. Like London's hodge-podge architecture, where timbered Tudor houses and Norman churches rub shoulders with shining skyscrapers, new traditions are layered on top of old. You never know quite what you'll get, which is what makes eating in the capital such a unique adventure.

What does unite London's sprawling food scene is creativity. The list of famous dishes invented in the city is endless, from Maids of Honour, dainty little cakes that were a favourite of King Henry VIII all the way back in the sixteenth century, to Omelette Arnold Bennett, dreamt up at the Savoy hotel in 1929. Modern classics, too, constantly make their debut. At Craft in Greenwich, chef Stevie Parle has a cult following for his roasted duck, cooked in a shell of pale clay and served on a bed of pine. And Middle Eastern restaurant Berber & Q's whole roasted cauliflower, slathered with spiced butter and sprinkled with rose petals, has been so influential you'll spot versions of it flowering all around the city.

**IT'S HARD
TO IDENTIFY
A SINGLE
FOOD, OR
CUISINE,
THAT
DEFINES
LONDON...
WHAT DOES
UNITE THE
CITY'S
SPRAWLING
FOOD
SCENE IS
CREATIVITY.**



*The Golden Boy of Pye Corner
(View Pictures/Getty Images)*

Of course, the culinary map of London has not always been so enticing. For many years, its traditional, stodgy British dishes, with peculiar names such as ‘spotted dick’ and ‘toad in the hole’, horrified foreign visitors. ‘The badness of London restaurants,’ observed the American author Henry James in 1877, ‘is literally fabulous.’ But in the 1980s, a wave of innovative chefs and restaurants – Rose Gray and Ruth Roger’s The River Café and Rowley Leigh’s Kensington Place among them – surged over London, transforming it into a culinary mecca. The city’s cuisine has gone from strength to strength ever since.

The story of London and food begins thousands of years ago. Around 50AD Romans built a city they called Londinium on the banks of the River Thames. Being fond of the finer things in life, the Italian newcomers used the river to ship in their favourite foods from all corners of the Roman empire. Excavations of Roman London have revealed the remnants of such exotic produce as cherries and plums, peas and walnuts, none of which had been tasted in Britain before. The Romans even introduced their beloved, explosively pungent fish sauce: an amphora dug up in Southwark in South London carries the advert: ‘Luccius Tettius Aficanus supplies the finest fish sauce from Antipolis’. One can’t help but wonder what the native Britons (used to a blander diet of salted meat and bread) thought of this new condiment.

Later waves of immigrants added yet more foods to the London larder, heightening the city’s hunger for the new and exotic. In the seventeenth century, Jewish refugees from Portugal and Spain brought over the tradition of frying fish in flour. Before long, the crispy fish had been paired with another immigrant dish, the fried potatoes beloved of French and Belgian Huguenots, to create the now-classic British treat fish and chips. (There is fierce debate over which fish and chip shop was Britain’s first, but the humble shop opened by a Jewish immigrant called Joseph Malin in the East End in 1860 has as good a claim as any.)

In the twentieth century, the colourful Caribbean markets and shops of Brixton in South London were founded by West Indian immigrants. The first arrivals came on a ship called the *Empire Windrush* in 1948, bringing with them the sunshine flavours of jerk chicken, fish fritters and plantain. A few decades later, in the 1970s and 80s, the Vietnamese ‘boat people’ – many of whom were fleeing persecution after the Vietnam War – introduced the city to the delights of lemongrass and ginger, often combined to miraculous effect in hot steaming bowls of noodle soup, or pho.

As the home of Britain’s most powerful citizens, the Royal family, London was often the first place new foods were brought to – sometimes at the express demand of the monarch. In the sixteenth century, King Henry VIII’s salad-loving Spanish queen, Catherine of Aragon, introduced the royal court to lettuce, which she had especially imported from Holland. A century later, Charles II’s wife, Catherine of Braganza, popularised the drinking of tea,





The hustle and bustle of Covent Garden Market, 1864. (Photo by Museum of London/Heritage Images/Getty Images)

THE STORY OF LONDON AND FOOD BEGINS THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO.

turning the exotic Chinese drink into the aristocracy's new favourite pastime. Every corner of the then-formidable British Empire was raided for the dinner table; pineapples from the Caribbean, spices from India and corn from the Americas were all shipped down the Thames for the upper classes to marvel at.

What began as upper-class crazes quickly filtered down. In the 1600s, Londoners developed an insatiable taste for turtle soup, made from imported West Indian green turtles, and often served in the turtles' own shell. By 1776, there was such high demand for the delicacy that the London Tavern built huge tanks to store its live turtles; not a far cry, I like to think, from the upmarket restaurants which today keep live lobsters for their customers. Eating well, and copiously, was considered the true mark of a Londoner – though some people feared the city's love of good food verged on the immoral. On Pye Corner, not far from St Paul's Cathedral, there is a curious statue of a plump, golden-skinned boy mounted on a wall. He marks the place where the Great Fire of London of 1666 was finally put out, and a stern inscription below reads: 'This boy is in memory put up for the late Fire of London, occasioned by the sin of gluttony'. Many people associate London with the statue of Nelson, standing haughtily on his plinth in Trafalgar Square, or Queen Victoria, keeping watch over Buckingham Palace from her seat on the fountain outside. For me, that round-bellied little boy, wearing the beatific smirk of the well fed, is the most quintessentially London monument of them all.

Restaurants are a crucial thread in the fabric of London life. For centuries, the city's poorest citizens had little access to working kitchens, so 'cookshops' or 'ordinaries' where, for a few pennies, they could bring a lump of meat to be cooked in the oven, thrived. In the eighteenth century, diners filled their bellies at 'chophouses' or 'beefhouses', such as Dolly's Chophouse in Paternoster Row, which was famous for its hot steaks, and attracted such well-known figures as *Robinson Crusoe* author Daniel Defoe, and Jonathan Swift, who wrote *Gulliver's Travels*. Chophouses were far from luxurious: Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his *English Notebooks* (1853–58) talks disparagingly of one, the Albert Dining Rooms, which offered only a 'filthy tablecloth, covered with other's people's crumbs; iron forks, leaden salt cellar, the commonest earthen plates; a little dark stall, to sit and eat in'. But just like London's pie and mash shops, they offered a convivial place for tired labourers to refuel and chat, with a pint of ale, for little more than sixpence.

There was also, of course, more high-end dining. In the nineteenth century, many of London's most iconic restaurants opened their doors. Among them were the Café Royal, favoured by King Edward VIII and Oscar Wilde, and the opulent The Criterion in Piccadilly, famously featured in Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, as the place where Dr Watson first hears the name of the mysterious detective who will become his room-mate.

Today, London's restaurant scene is more vibrant than ever. Many of the country's top chefs operate here, from Gordon Ramsay to Heston Blumenthal, and new eateries bubble up every day; in 2015, an unprecedented 179 new venues opened. With seventy-two Michelin stars (and counting), fine dining is still a draw for tourists and locals alike. But one of the great delights of the past decade has been the flurry of top-quality, more casual eateries. At Polpo in Soho, guests sip wine from tumblers and tuck into the gorgeous Venetian-style tapas called cichetti without a white tablecloth or snooty sommelier in

sight. At pasta restaurant Padella, near London Bridge, office workers spend their lunch breaks queuing for a bowl of pappardelle with rich slow-cooked beef shin or tender ravioli of pumpkin and marjoram, for as little as £5 a plate. And perhaps most excitingly of all, there is street food.

Street food has been part of London life for centuries. In the Victorian period, the city's cobbled alleys and bustling thoroughfares heaved with hawkers selling every delicacy imaginable – fried fish and pea soup, baked potatoes and Chelsea buns, imported oranges and pickled whelks. Eels were a favourite, fished fresh from the Thames, often skinned alive in front of buyers, and served hot and steaming. In his book *London Labour and the London Poor*, the journalist Henry Mayhew painted a vivid picture of a crowded Saturday night market, 'where the working-classes generally purchase their Sunday's dinner'.



A fishmonger with pots of jellied eels, cockles and whelks in the 1950s. (Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Getty Images)

After pay-time on Saturday night, or early on Sunday morning, the crowd in the New-cut, and the Brill in particular, is almost impassable. Indeed, the scene in these parts has more of the character of a fair than a market... The pavement and the road are crowded with purchasers and street-sellers. The housewife in her thick shawl, with the market-basket on her arm, walks slowly on, stopping now to look at the stall of caps, and now to cheapen a bunch of greens. Little boys, holding three or four onions in their hand, creep between the people, wriggling their way through every interstice, and asking for custom in whining tones, as if seeking charity. Then the tumult of the thousand different cries of the eager dealers, all shouting at the top of their voices, at one and the same time, is almost bewildering. 'So-old again,' roars one. 'Chestnuts all 'to, a penny a score,' bawls another. 'An 'aypenny a skin, blacking,' squeaks a boy. 'Buy, buy, buy, buy, buy – bu-u-uy!' cries the butcher. 'Half-quire of paper for a penny,' bellows the street stationer. 'An 'aypenny a lot ing-uns.' 'Twopence a pound grapes.' 'Three a penny Yarmouth bloaters.' 'Who'll buy a bonnet for fourpence?' 'Pick 'em out cheap here! Three pair for a halfpenny, bootlaces.' 'Now's your time! beautiful whelks, a penny a lot.' 'Here's ha'p'orths,' shouts the perambulating confectioner. 'Come and look at 'em! Here's toasters!' bellows one with a Yarmouth bloater stuck on a toasting-fork. 'Penny a lot, fine russets,' calls the apple woman: and so the Babel goes on.

As time went by, London's vibrant street food scene dwindled. Ten years ago, the phrase evoked limp hot dogs or dry burgers from vans, probably eaten while drunk, and with a nasty bout of food poisoning afterwards. But today there is a new generation of passionate traders, serving mouthwatering



THE GRAPES . LIMEHOUSE

The Grapes public house in Limehouse, a favourite of Dickens, as pictured in the Illustrated London News, 1887. (The Print Collector/Getty Images)

food from all over the world. Peckish Londoners can choose between bao (soft Taiwanese steamed buns, often filled with gooey chunks of pork belly), Argentinian-style steaks smeared with vibrant jalapeño salsa, or Hawaiian poke: zingy, spicy bowls of marinated fresh fish, served with fluffy rice and a crunchy scattering of sesame seeds. Many of these stalls operate in dedicated street food markets, such as Dinerama in Dalston or Model Market in Lewisham, and give young, talented chefs – who don't have the money to set up their own restaurants, or perhaps want more freedom to experiment – a platform from which to share their food with their world. Many of London's best and most cutting-edge dishes are now to be found in a polystyrene box, eaten with a plastic fork, in front of a truck.

It would feel wrong to write a book about London's food without mentioning drink. The city has always had a thirst for alcohol. 'To see the number of taverns, alehouses etc, one would imagine Bacchus the only god that is worshipped here,' sniffed Thomas Brown in 1730. For centuries, beer and ale were the most popular drinks, especially with the lower classes; the deliciously dark style of beer known as porter was actually invented in London in the eighteenth century, and is so named because of its popularity with the 'porters' – the men who transferred goods up and down the city in the days before Amazon delivery trucks.

The preferred place to drink beer is, of course, the pub. London's watering holes are an institution, with the oldest buildings dating back to at least Tudor times. Sadly, just as in the rest of Britain, many pubs are dying, the sorrowful consequence of a maelstrom of factors including rising rents for landlords and the smoking ban. Thankfully, many beautiful old pubs, such as The Grapes in Limehouse (which features in Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*) and The Olde Cheshire Cheese in Fleet Street, a favourite haunt of journalists, are still open for business. And while the pubs might be struggling, bars – in particular, cocktail bars – are on the rise. Artesian, at the Langham Hotel, has been repeatedly named the world's best cocktail bar. All across the city, innovative mixologists are crafting astonishing drinks featuring homemade syrups, exotic spirits and clouds of scented smoke which billow from the glass.

Of course, not all of London's drinking history has been so jolly. One particular tippie, gin, became a demon which stalked the city for half a century. By the 1740s, the average Londoner was necking 10 litres of the spirit a year; it was, in the grave words of Sir John Fielding, a 'liquid fire by which men drink their hell'. The orgy of lethal drinking only ended when the price of grain, from which gin is distilled, rose. Gin is now undergoing a renaissance; several new distilleries, such as Sipsmith, have popped up in the city in recent years, and sales are soaring. Thankfully, the modern Londoner is more likely to sip a refreshing G&T in a fashionable gin bar than neck a bottle and have a lie-down in the gutter... unless we've had a really bad day at work.

Food and drink runs through London's history like the Thames. If New York is the city that never sleeps, London is the city that lives to eat. From gourmet cheese shops to old-fashioned butchers, street food vans to sleek Italian restaurants – whatever your heart (or stomach) desires in London, it is there. And while the tourists might come for Buckingham Palace, the Tower of London and the shiny red buses, you can bet your last Liquorice Allsort

that some of their best memories will be of the food. To get up at 4am to visit the fish market at Billingsgate, where chefs bid for huge crates of glitteringly fresh fish, and hungry seals wait for scraps in the neighbouring dock, is an unforgettable experience. And what could be a better way of spending a Saturday night than touring the atmospheric cocktail bars of East London (followed, if you really want to be authentic, by a late-night kebab).

This book is a celebration of all the culinary joys that Britain's capital has to offer. Whether you're a long-time resident, a visitor, or someone far, far away who dreams of one day sipping a cup of tea in the shadow of Big Ben, I hope you enjoy it.



Shoppers browse stalls at Brixton, the heart of the West Indian community, in 1952. (Charles Hewitt/Getty Images)

A NOTE ON INGREDIENTS

SALT

The most important ingredient in your cupboard. Salt obviously adds, well, saltiness, but it also intensifies and unifies flavours. Most recipes in this book tell you to season according to taste, but in cases where I think it is crucial, I have specified a measurement, e.g. half a teaspoon. Always add a pinch to your baking – you won't taste it, but the flavour of the cakes and biscuits will be magically heightened.

DAIRY

Use whole milk when cooking, if you can; the taste and texture is much better. You'll notice crème fraîche popping up a lot in the book; it has all the richness of cream, but brings a lovely tanginess, too. I use crème fraîche frequently in savoury dishes, but also on the side of very sweet desserts. I find it a more balanced accompaniment than ice cream or cream.

BAKING

Eggs are always large, unless otherwise specified, and preferably free-range and organic. If you use smaller eggs, be aware it might affect the success of the recipe. Traditionally salted butter is used for savoury cooking and unsalted for baking, but I often lob salted butter into a cake if it's all I've got in the fridge ... and nobody's turned down a slice yet. When baking, try and make sure the ingredients are room temperature before you start; the end result will be lighter and fluffier.

ENGLISH MUSTARD POWDER

A cook's secret weapon. Add a teaspoon or so of this primrose-coloured powder to creamy sauces, pastry, dumplings – anywhere you want a gentle kick of heat.

GOLDEN SYRUP AND TREACLE

No London kitchen is complete without tins of Tate & Lyle's golden syrup and treacle, usually welded to the bottom of the cupboard by the sticky rivulets running down the side. Invented during the Victorian era, these are both by-products of the sugar refining process and add a rich sweetness to classic British bakes such as flapjack and gingerbread. If you're not in the UK, maple syrup or corn syrup makes a reasonable substitute for golden syrup, while treacle can be swapped for light molasses, though the results won't be exactly the same.

EXOTIC INGREDIENTS

The London larder has expanded considerably in recent years, as immigration and globalisation introduce us to exciting new flavours. In these pages you will spot such new arrivals as gochujang (spicy Korean chilli paste) black rice (an East Asian staple) and sumac (a fragrant berry, widely used as a spice in Middle Eastern cuisine). All the more exotic ingredients I have used should be available in large supermarkets, and if you can't find them there, they can easily be bought online. Souschef.co.uk is my favourite website for ordering unusual foods.

BREAKFAST & BRUNCH



YOU CAN TELL A LOT ABOUT A CITY BY THE FOOD IT STARTS THE DAY WITH. PARISIANS NIBBLE ELEGANT CROISSANTS, AND NEW YORKERS WOLF DOWN BAGELS AS THEY RUN FOR THE SUBWAY.

THE CAPITAL OF A PROUD BREAKFASTING NATION, LONDON'S TRADITIONAL HEARTY STANDBYS INCLUDE THE FULL ENGLISH AND STEAMING BOWLS OF PORRIDGE. WHILE PLUMP SAUSAGES AND BAKED BEANS CAN STILL BE ENJOYED IN A LONDON CAFF OR 'GREASY SPOON', THAT CAFÉ IS NOW LIKELY TO BE FOUND ALONGSIDE A MIDDLE EASTERN BAKERY SELLING HONEY-DRENCHED PASTRIES, OR AN INDIAN RESTAURANT OFFERING ITS SPICY TAKE ON THE CLASSIC BACON SARNIE, A UNIQUE DISH YOU WON'T FIND ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD.

BUT WHEREVER LONDONERS BREAKFAST, YOU CAN BE SURE A MUG OF MILKY TEA OR STEAMING COFFEE IS NEVER FAR AWAY.

BURNT HONEY GRAPEFRUIT WITH CARDAMOM-GINGER YOGHURT

I feel the same way about The Wolseley, the grand café next to the Ritz hotel, as Holly Golightly did about Tiffany's: 'Nothing very bad could happen to you there.' There is something about its soaring arches and elegant black-and-gold colour scheme that immediately makes me take a deep breath and relax. My breakfast of choice is the grapefruit, where the segments are caramelised to glossy perfection, then piled triumphantly back into the shell. At home, I make a slightly more rustic breakfast of grapefruit coated in honey, served on a fragrant pillow of yoghurt. Burnt honey is a recent discovery of mine; you simply cook honey in a pan until it transforms into a dark, rich, caramel-like sauce.

SERVES 4

2 pink grapefruit
70ml runny honey
500ml thick, natural
Greek-style yoghurt
seeds from 3 green cardamom
pods, crushed
5 pieces of stem ginger from a jar
(about 100g), finely chopped
80g pistachios, chopped (optional)

Using a sharp knife, cut down the side of each grapefruit to remove the skin and pith. Cut each one horizontally into about six round slices, around 0.5cm each in thickness.

Put the honey in a medium-sized saucepan over a medium heat. Within a minute or so it will start to bubble vigorously. Cook without stirring, occasionally swirling the pan, until the honey has gone a deep amber brown and smells rich and nutty. This shouldn't take more than 5 minutes or so, but watch the pan carefully – the honey can burn very quickly.

Take the pan off the heat and tumble in the grapefruit, along with any juices. Using tongs, swirl the slices so they are nicely coated in the honey, then tip the whole lot into a bowl. Leave to cool for about 10 minutes.

Mix the yoghurt with the crushed cardamom and ginger in a bowl. Divide between four plates, bowls or glasses, then arrange the grapefruit slices on top, along with a drizzle of any leftover honey. Sprinkle over the pistachios, if using.





FIG AND FETA PIDE

Honey and Co. is a restaurant so tiny that eating there feels as though you've accidentally wandered into somebody's home and plonked yourself at the dinner table. But husband-and-wife team Itamar Srulovich and Sarit Packer serve their vibrant Middle-Eastern-inspired food with such boundless charm and energy, it's hard not to love every cramped minute.

This is their recipe for pide, the boat-shaped flatbreads popular in Turkey. They are very easy to make, and if figs and feta don't float your pide, they can be customised with any flavours you like. I serve these for a late breakfast at the weekend, drizzled with honey and escorted by a strong coffee.

SERVES 6

For the dough

300g plain flour
7g sachet fast-action dried yeast
1 teaspoon caster sugar
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 tablespoon nigella seeds
pinch of cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon honey
150ml natural yoghurt
oil, for greasing

For the filling

5 tablespoons natural yoghurt
100g feta cheese, crumbled
½ teaspoon dried oregano
½ teaspoon sumac, or grated zest
of 1 lemon

For the topping

100g baby spinach
6 figs, each cut into 4–5 slices
1 green chilli, thinly sliced
olive oil, for drizzling
pinch of dried oregano
salt and freshly ground black pepper

To make the dough, place the flour, yeast, sugar, salt, pepper, nigella seeds and cayenne pepper in a large mixing bowl. Dissolve the honey in 100ml of warm water, and add to the bowl along with the yoghurt. Use a wooden spoon to mix together into a dough, then knead for about 3 minutes by hand. The dough will be quite soft.

Put the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, covered with oiled cling film or a damp tea towel, making sure the cover doesn't touch the dough. Leave in a warm place for 1–1½ hours, until it has doubled in size.

Make the filling by mixing the yoghurt, crumbled feta, oregano, sumac or lemon zest in a bowl to create a paste.

Flour your hands, then divide the dough into six pieces and roughly stretch each one into a boat-like oval, around 18cm long and 10cm wide. Place onto a baking tray lined with baking parchment. Spread 1 tablespoon of the feta mix on to the centre of each one, leaving a 1cm border around the edge. Top with a handful of baby spinach, a few slices of fig and chilli, and a drizzle of oil. Season with salt and pepper, and sprinkle over the oregano.

Use your thumb and forefinger to pinch the sides of the dough so it stands up slightly, just as if you were crimping pastry, then pinch the two ends to create even more of a boat shape. Don't worry if they're messy. Cover with clingfilm or a tea towel, and leave for about 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 220°C/200°C Fan/Gas Mark 7. Bake for 12–15 minutes, until golden. Serve warm.

BLACK RICE AND COCONUT PORRIDGE

Few London chefs have been as influential as Yotam Ottolenghi. When the Israeli-born chef opened his first deli in Notting Hill in 1992, his bold palette of global flavours ran like an electric shock through the city and rewired our tastebuds forever. Now harissa paste and preserved lemons rub shoulders with the Marmite and Bisto gravy in our cupboards.

My favourite Ottolenghi-led discovery is black rice. I first tried this dish at his Soho restaurant Nopi, and it has been a staple breakfast in my house ever since. Inspired by a popular south-east Asian recipe, it's essentially a rice pudding, but don't expect it to taste like the pappy English version – the rice has a delicious nutty chewiness, while the coconut is delicate and sweet. You can eat this hot, but I also love it served cold, topped with a spoonful of yoghurt and whatever fruit needs using up in the fridge.

SERVES 4

300g black glutinous rice
250ml coconut cream
400ml coconut milk
70g caster sugar
pinch of salt
1 vanilla pod, or 1 teaspoon vanilla
bean paste or extract

To serve (optional)

grated zest of 1 lime
palm sugar or soft light brown sugar
tropical fruits of your choice, chopped
(I like pineapple, mango and kiwi)

If you have time, soak the rice in a bowl of cold water for a few hours (this will soften it slightly) and drain. If not, just rinse it a few times.

Put the rice in a pan with the coconut cream and milk, the sugar, a generous pinch of salt and 200ml of water. Halve the vanilla pod lengthways and scrape the seeds into the pan, or add the vanilla paste or extract. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer vigorously for about an hour, stirring frequently, until soft, creamy and oozy (loosen the mixture with a little extra milk or water, if needed).

Divide the porridge between bowls and top with a sprinkling of lime zest, a smattering of sugar and some fruit, if using.



'NEWFANGLED, ABOMINABLE, HEATHENISH': HOW THE CAPITAL FELL IN LOVE WITH COFFEE

In 1674, a pamphlet appeared on the streets of London. Supposedly written on behalf of the city's women, it railed against a 'newfangled, abominable, heathenish' drink that had taken the city by storm. This 'puddlewatter', the pamphlet's outraged authors declared, had transformed their hard-working husbands into lazy, gossiping, effeminate 'cocksparrrows', who rolled into bed so stupefied at the end of the day that they weren't even capable of satisfying their wives. So what was this toxic brew? Not gin or beer, but something rather more exotic – coffee.

The first coffee house in London was opened by a Greek entrepreneur called Pasqua Roseé in 1652, after he developed a taste for the bitter drink in Turkey. By the turn of the eighteenth century, they were all over the city; as many as 2,000, according to contemporaries. The attraction of the coffee house was little to do with coffee itself. Thick and gritty and black as soot, it was a far cry from the silky cappuccinos and sweet vanilla lattes of today. Instead, these rough-and-ready cafés became the go-to place for discussion and debate. People from every walk of life went to read newspapers, fight over politics or transact killer deals, all fuelled by jitter-inducing levels of caffeine.

The popularity of the coffee houses was much noticed by foreign visitors. 'All English men are great newsmongers,' wrote the Swiss noble César de Saussure in 1726. 'Workmen habitually begin the day by going to coffee-rooms to read the latest news.' The coffee houses' role as a forum for political debate also unsettled those in power: in 1675, King Charles II issued a proclamation against them, though it was never upheld.

Each coffee house attracted a different flavour of clientele. Lawyers and scientists frequented The Grecian in Wapping; artists drank at Old Slaughter's; army men favoured The Little Devil. Some houses were rowdier than others. The Hoxton Square Coffeeshouse had an unsavoury habit of putting people on mock trial. A suspected lunatic would be wheeled in for a 'jury' of coffee fiends to interrogate; if the poor soul was found guilty of madness, he would be carted off to the nearest asylum. There is even a story that Sir Isaac Newton and his chums from The Royal Society dissected a live

dolphin on the table of The Grecian – though I imagine it's more likely they went to the coffee house to discuss the experiment, rather than getting out their knives midway through an Americano.

Despite such eccentricities, coffee houses really were a crucible of knowledge and enterprise. Lloyd's Coffee House was popular with sailors and shipowners, and became the go-to spot for marine insurers to meet. It eventually grew into the global insurance business Lloyd's of London. And when a broker called John Castaing started posting lists of stocks and commodity prices at Jonathan's Coffee House in Change Alley, he laid the foundations for the Stock Exchange. The historian Dr Matthew Green has a persuasive theory that such an outburst of economic initiative might have had

**PEOPLE FROM
EVERY WALK
OF LIFE WENT
TO COFFEE
HOUSES
TO READ
NEWSPAPERS,
FIGHT OVER
POLITICS OR
TRANSACT
KILLER DEALS.**



Algerian coffee stores, Soho. (Keith van-Loen/Alamy)

something to do with the fact Londoners were drinking coffee instead of booze: 'Until the mid-seventeenth century, most people in England were either slightly – or very – drunk all of the time. Drink London's fetid river water at your own peril; most people wisely favoured watered-down ale or beer. The arrival of coffee, then, triggered a dawn of sobriety that laid the foundations for truly spectacular economic growth ... as people thought clearly for the first time.'

The coffee houses' reign didn't last for long. Well-heeled members' clubs lured some patrons away, while many gentlemen transferred their allegiance to a different fashionable drink, tea. It wasn't until the 1950s and 60s, when Italian culture became cool, that coffee shops returned in serious numbers to London. Sipping an espresso at Soho bars like Moka – the first place in Britain to have a Gaggia coffee machine – was

seen as the ultimate in sophistication by worldly young Londoners. 'Once our beer was frothy / But now it's frothy coffee,' sang Max Bygraves in his 1960 hit 'Fings ain't wot they used t'be'. These mini-skirted and hair-gelled rebels clutching their dinky Italian coffee cups might have been less enamoured if they'd realised they were actually taking part in a British tradition that stretched back centuries.

London's workers still run on coffee. Many get their fix from bland American chains like Starbucks; recently, however, there has been a pleasing explosion of independent shops, run by coffee buffs whose brews are made with passion and care. Although it's rather sad that the wild spirit of the original coffee houses has evaporated, at least you can enjoy your espresso without watching a live dissection.