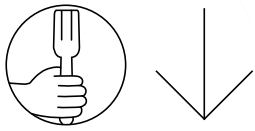




Pretty fly for a white guy



MAN FOOD WITH **MARK HIX**

This month, our chef's gone fishing for wild salmon

Recently, my chef-friend Richard Corrigan invited me to join him on a weekend fishing trip to Ireland's Blackwater. Not one to pass up an invitation, I agreed immediately, not least because Corrigan doesn't really fly fish and I wanted to watch him flounder (get it?).

A few weeks before we were due to leave, his PA contacted me and politely enquired which course I wanted to cook. As far as I was aware I wasn't going to be doing any cooking. Something smelled fishy. It turns out that our mutual friend Paul Flynn, of the Tannery Restaurant and cookery school, had roped Corrigan into helping him work on the Dungarvan Food Festival, which, by extension, meant that I was helping him too. But hey — what's cooking dinner for 30 people when you get to have a day of fishing with your mates in return?

On the first night of our trip Corrigan took us to the O'Brien Chop House in Lismore where the owner Justin Green greeted me with a confession — that his chop house had been influenced by my own Oyster & Chop House in Smithfield. (High praise indeed.) It was pretty good, actually. In fact, the home-grown sea kale with hollandaise, roast turbot for two and a kilo rib of beef to share was fantastic. I'd better watch my back.

After dinner we made our way to Justin's hotel, Ballyvolane House — I'd recommend it highly. If you fancy doing some fishing yourself, your best bet is to ask their fantastic ghillie Norman to set you up — he'll be more than happy to oblige. We spent a day on Blackwater, and let me tell you, I fished hard — and not a sausage (or a salmon) to show for it. That said, it did get me in the mood for some fish, so here's my ultimate recipe for hand-caught (if you're lucky) salmon.

Heritage tomato and lovage salad

(SERVES 4)

There are some great heritage varieties of tomato grown in the UK. They're usually packed full of flavour, so it's not really necessary to do anything too clever with them. A few spring onions and some torn lovage leaves is enough to turn a plate of tomatoes into a pretty special salad.

Like basil, lovage has a way of working itself into dishes to give them a real lift, but it can be overpowering

and needs to be used in moderation. If you can't get hold of lovage (which is available in nurseries and specialist greengrocers) then celery leaves would also do the job.

METHOD

Cut the tomatoes into chunks, leaving some small ones whole if you like. Arrange on serving plates; tear the lovage leaves and sprinkle over the top. Drizzle with vinegar and oil as desired, and season to taste.



INGREDIENTS

300-400g
mixed
tomatoes

2tbsp finely
chopped
chives or
spring onions

A few sprigs
of lovage
(or celery
leaves)

A little malt
vinegar, to
drizzle

2tbsp extra
virgin
rapeseed oil

Sea salt and
freshly
ground black
pepper



The wild salmon season typically runs from spring until October



INGREDIENTS

4 portions of salmon, weighing about 160-180g each

Vegetable or corn oil for brushing

150g shelled fresh peas

2tsp caster sugar

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

A couple of good knobs of butter

2 shallots, peeled, halved and finely chopped

120ml double cream

½ tbsp chopped tarragon leaves

Grilled fillet of salmon with crushed peas and tarragon

(SERVES 4)

Wild salmon is a real treat and rivers in the British Isles are seeing more and more of them. If you can't find wild salmon there are some good farmed fish on the market, but bear in mind they probably won't be able to match the flavour.

METHOD

Cook the peas in boiling salted water with the sugar for about 10min until tender, then drain. Melt the butter in a

pan and gently cook the shallots on a low heat for a few minutes. Meanwhile, roughly chop the peas either by hand or briefly in a food processor then add to the shallots with the cream and tarragon. Season and simmer to a thick-ish consistency.

In the meantime, heat a ribbed griddle pan and lightly oil it. Season the salmon and cook for 2-3min on each side, being sure to keep the fillets nice and pink. Spoon the peas on to warm plates and lay the salmon on top.



ALEX JAMES

All Cheeses Great & Small

This month, the country-dwelling, cheese-obsessed Blur bassist finally finds a use for his microwave

Recently I've been putting my "foodio" [food + studio, see what he's done there?] to use exploring the melting properties of cheese.

The classic melter is Swiss raclette, traditionally set by an open fire and allowed to ooze all over potatoes. It's a hard cheese to beat, but this month I've been amazed to discover how beautifully other cheeses behave in the microwave. Thus — believe it or not — I thoroughly recommend giving your favourite cheese a good zapping before taking to it with a hunk of bread.

You'll be pleasantly surprised. *Alex James is The Sun's food writer*

