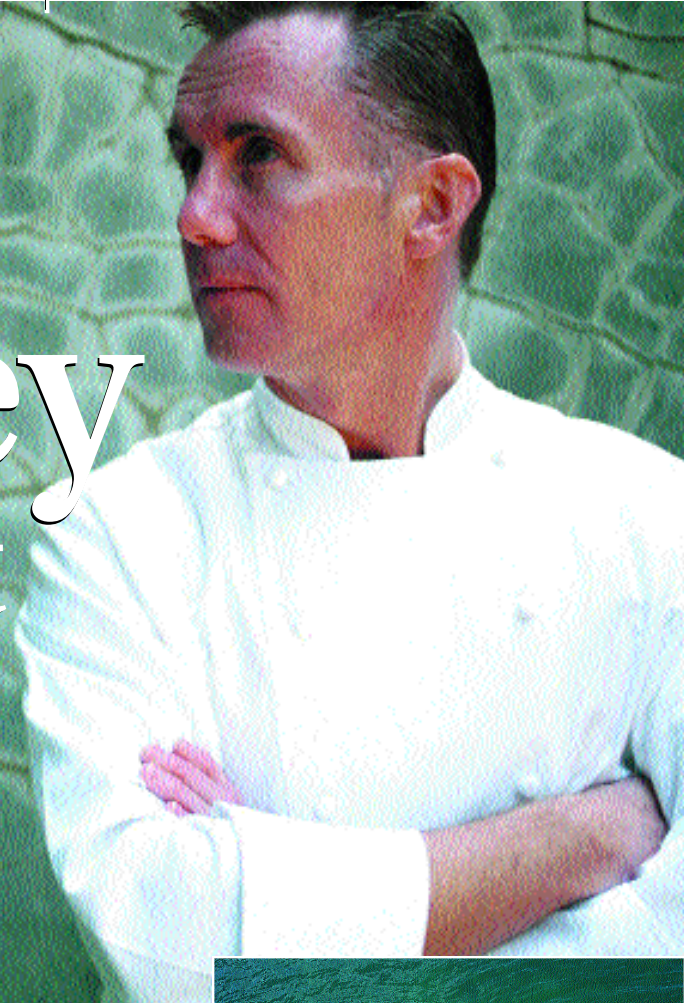


The Galley Gourmet



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Simplicity and fine ingredients are the key to successful on-board cuisine but they can also make the most sensational meals, as top British chef Gary Rhodes explains to Andrew Noakes.



When Gary Rhodes first burst upon British TV screens in 1994, his series 'Rhodes Around Britain' attracted rather more column inches for its star's spiky haircut than for Gary's underlying message: that British food was being ignored, and deserved better. A decade later Gary has dozens of TV programmes and a string of best-selling books to his name, plus two successful restaurants in London and another about to open. He's hosted gastronomic cruises on the QE2 and gourmet trips aboard the Orient Express. But still Gary Rhodes has the same evangelical zeal for simple food.

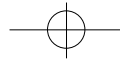
'I'm trying to revive a lot of the great old favourites, but with a new fresh

identity – a cleaner, crisper flavour,' says the chef who made his name at the Greenhouse Restaurant in London's Mayfair with great British classics such as faggots, oxtails, and bread and butter pudding. 'Our new restaurant will be the only one in London serving steamed roly-poly with custard and jam. It's something you just don't see any more, but it's going to be sensational. When it's so light and fluffy with a little hint of lemon that's working into the suet, and then you've got a good home-made jam working through it as well with the lovely accompaniment of the fresh custard – I can't think of anything nicer.'

Although he champions British

classics, winning coveted Michelin stars at both his London eateries as a result, Gary is quick to point out the French and Italian influences that give his cooking an extra edge – Mediterranean ideas that have lightened traditionally starchy British foods. 'I was trained in French cuisine. I take a lot of influence from that and take a little bit of Italian as well, so you'll see that European/Mediterranean touch happening. I think the great thing about Italian cuisine has always been to use a minimum number of flavours necessary and make sure that each one holds its own personal identity.'

One evening on the QE2 – which has kitchens so vast and so well stocked that



practically any whim can be catered for – Gary called for nothing more elaborate than cool lobster, potato chips and mayonnaise. ‘All the other tables were looking quite jealous,’ he chuckles.

The idea of allowing fine ingredients to shine in simple combinations translates perfectly to on-board dining on smaller vessels. ‘Keep the flavours simple and make sure they shout very loud,’ he recommends to *Sundeck* readers, recalling a lunch he once had while cruising on a yacht off Cannes with friends and family. ‘The food was provided for us. All of a sudden this big bowl of langoustines and prawns arrived on the table, and a little bit of salad on the side – really quality mayonnaise as well. We were just breaking open the langoustines and dipping them in, they were sweet and they were succulent. It’s that style of food.’

A perfect example is the starter Gary has selected for our menu, a melon and cucumber salad with gorgonzola and watercress. ‘Once it’s been salted the

flavour of the cucumber becomes so powerful. You have the crispness of the cucumber, the melon lovely and ripe, and the gorgonzola...’

His voice trails off as the Rhodes palette recalls the flavour of the tangy blue-green veined cheese. ‘I’m talking about real Italian gorgonzola. If you can find a really good gorgonzola which is just starting to melt and you drop that in, it becomes almost like a butter you’re

eating amongst the salad. What we’re creating here are different textures – we’ve got a savoury, we’ve got sweetness, then we’ve got a sharp little bite from the watercress. I’ve also introduced a little yoghurt dressing which has got the citrus flavour of lime and lemon, and a little touch of orange juice which has been reduced and slightly sweetened with caster sugar – very slightly sweetened. I can imagine if somebody threw a plate of that on the table and gave me a good, crisp white wine to go with it, I would be in heaven.’

Both his new book, *The Complete Cookery Year*, and the Gary Rhodes website are packed with hints and tips on creating that sublime meal. Gary suggests preparing food in advance where possible, as your guests have come to see you rather than just for the food you are serving; again, the principle of making simple dishes with good ingredients helps. But he counsels against dressing salads too early to avoid limp lettuce. It’s wise to ask if any guests

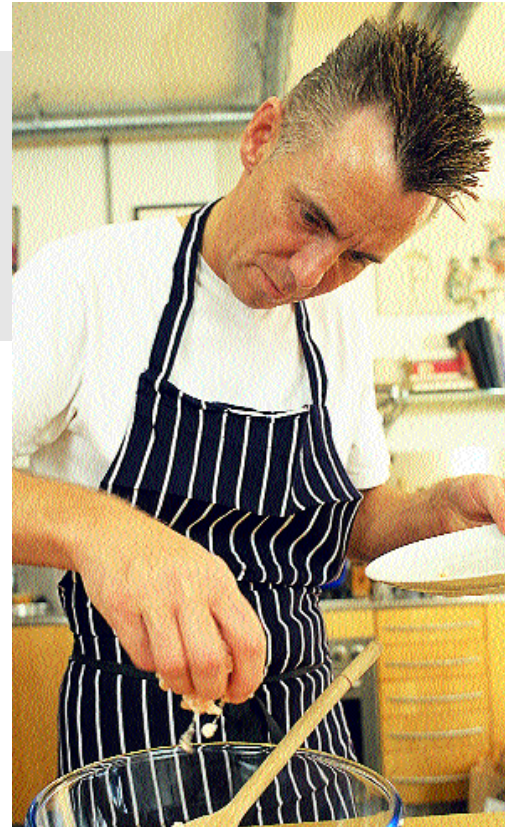
“What we’re creating here are different textures – we’ve got a savoury, we’ve got a sweetness, then we’ve got a sharp little bite from the watercress.”

ABOVE LEFT: MICHELIN STARRED CHEF GARY RHODES IS PASSIONATE ABOUT SIMPLE FOOD AND GIVING OLD FAVOURITES A NEWER, FRESHER IDENTITY

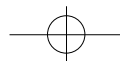
LEFT: FOR ONBOARD DINING, KEEP THE FLAVOURS SIMPLE, ADVISES GARY

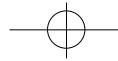
RIGHT: GARY’S SPIKEY HAIR WAS ONCE HIS TRADEMARK, BUT NOW HE’S KNOWN MORE FOR SIMPLY BEING ONE OF BRITAIN’S FINEST CHEFS

BELOW: THE MENU SPECIALLY SELECTED FOR SUNDECK BY GARY, CONSISTING OF MELON AND CUCUMBER SALAD WITH GORGONZOLA AND WATERCRESS, CRISPY WILD SALMON WITH WARM LEMON AND TARRAGON MAYONNAISE, AND COINTREAU CHAMPAGNE RASPBERRIES



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LEFT: FINE INGREDIENTS ARE THE KEY; THE SECRET IS TO FIND A GOOD MARKET SELLING QUALITY LOCAL PRODUCE. HERE, GARY PICKS HIS OWN IN PREPARATION FOR THE CHAMPAGNE RASPBERRY DESSERT YOU WILL FIND OVERLEAF.

BELOW: GARY'S LATEST BOOK IS 'THE COMPLETE COOKERY YEAR', AVAILABLE FROM BBC BOOKS.

are vegetarian, and to offer a non-alcoholic alternative if wine is served with the meal. Being relaxed and enjoying yourself is, he says, far more important than the niceties of dining etiquette, for hosts and guests alike.

Gary is also keen to point out that his recipes are intended to inspire ideas, not to be followed slavishly, and that the menu should be flexible enough to take advantage of produce that is in season at the time. 'You could be looking at something like a simple tomato and basil salad but with a really superb olive oil and a good twist of pepper and sea salt,' he explains. 'Just phenomenal, providing you're eating the tomato during its right season and you've got basil that you've just torn, not chopped and bruised, but broken and sprinkled across the top. I could eat bowlfuls of that sort of thing because it's good, easy food. Those are the kind of flavours I want to be working with.'

The secret is to find a good market selling quality local produce. 'I think Cannes has one of the greatest food markets I've ever been to – the foods there are just incredible. If I was cooking

on a yacht I'd be there first thing in the morning,' he says.

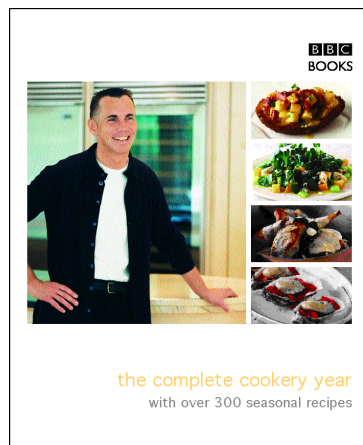
More gastronomic delights would await us just a few miles from Cannes, says Gary. Along the coast to the south east lies the village of La Napoule and the Restaurant L'Oasis, still sporting two Michelin stars even though famed French chef Louis Outhier has now moved on. To the north west, there's the Chevre d'Or in the medieval village of

Eze, looking down on Nice and Cap Ferrat. 'You're up on this mountainside and I'd say without a doubt that it's the most sensational view in the world,' Gary recalls. 'And the food in L'Oasis equals it – it's the most sensational food, amazing. That and a bottle of Krug rosé – perfect.'

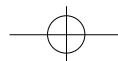
Gary and his family – wife Jenny, whom he met at catering college, and sons Samuel and George – spend a lot of time on the water during their regular trips to the south of France. 'My wife thinks about having a yacht on a daily basis. When we're out on one she'll point at something as it goes past and say "There it is, that's the one I want". And it's a ship...! I've got a good bank manager, but not that good,' he jokes. 'We always make sure that there's one or two days of our trip when we'll be out all day on a boat – so we can dive off the side, enjoy a good swim, be as lazy as we want. We like that from the morning and all the way until late at night.'

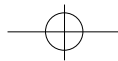
The food on board will, of course, be simple but sensational. 'What we'll normally do is have a light lunch, then there'll be a little something in the afternoon. Then when it gets to nine or ten o'clock at night and we get back into bay, there we are just eating cheese with red wine. A great way to finish the day.'

For further details and a special rate on *The Complete Cookery Year*, please see our contacts section on page 225.



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Gary Rhodes' Sundeck Menu*

Melon and Cucumber Salad with Gorgonzola and Watercress

The melon and cucumber combination presents a refreshing starter or lunch snack in summer months. It's during the summer months that melons are at their most fragrant and juicy. Charantais or Cantaloupe are first choice here, both showing off a rich orangey flesh, with colourful flavour to match. Gorgonzola is an Italian blue cow's milk cheese; its greenish-blue streaks discharging a spicy bite surrounded by a delicate, rich creamy cheese that melts in the mouth. An even softer version is Dolcelatte ('sweet milk' in Italian). To finish this salad, I've chosen watercress sprigs, lightly tossed in natural yoghurt and black pepper, with a citrus dressing to drizzle.

SERVES 4 AS A STARTER

1 cucumber
Salt and black pepper
1 Charantais or Cantaloupe melon
Juice of 2 oranges
1/2 teaspoon caster sugar
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon lime juice
3 tablespoons olive oil (preferably with a fruity flavour)
175g (6oz) Gorgonzola cheese, thin rind removed
2-3 tablespoons natural yoghurt
1 large or 2 small bunches of watercress, picked into sprigs and rinsed

Peel the cucumber, splitting it in half lengthwise. Scoop out the seeds with a teaspoon. Cut each half into three long strips, before cutting into approximately 1cm (1/2in) cubes. Place the cubes in a colander, sprinkling with a teaspoon of salt and stirring it in well. Leave the cucumber pieces to drain for 20-30 minutes. This releases excess water, leaving a more complete cucumber flavour. The cubes may well need to be lightly rinsed if slightly too salty.

Top and bottom the melon, cutting it into eight wedges. Remove the seeds, slicing away the skin beneath the flesh. You may need to split each wedge in two lengthwise, before cutting the melon into cubes. Once cut, refrigerate for a chilled, crispy refreshing bite, but do not allow them to become too icy, as this blands, rather than enhances, their finished flavour.

Boil the orange juice in a small saucepan, allowing it to reduce in volume to approximately 2 tablespoons, taking on a more concentrated flavour. Remove from the heat and add the caster sugar. Once cooled, mix in a small bowl with the lemon and lime juice, whisking in the olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.

Mix together the cucumber and melon, drizzling with a few drops of the citrus dressing. Scatter the cubes over four plates, crumbling the Gorgonzola over each. Spoon 2 tablespoons of the yoghurt into the watercress sprigs (adding the extra spoonful if preferred), tossing it through the leaves with a good twist of black pepper. Present the leaves on top of the fruits, finishing with a few extra drops of the citrus dressing.

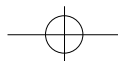
"Gorgonzola is an Italian blue cow's milk cheese; its greenish-blue streaks discharging a spicy bite surrounded by a delicate, rich creamy cheese that melts in the mouth."

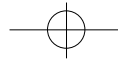


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ABOVE: MELON AND CUCUMBER SALAD WITH GORGONZOLA AND WATERCRESS

*All recipes from 'The Complete Cookery Year' by Gary Rhodes published by BBC Books. Copyright © Gary Rhodes 2003.
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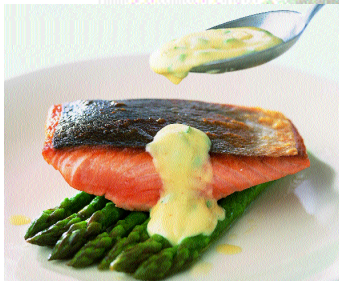




Gary Rhodes' Sundeck Menu (Cont.)

Crispy Wild Salmon with Warm Lemon and Tarragon Mayonnaise

Wild salmon is at its best during summer months, with a richer flavour. The crispy edge is provided by the skin, which, when not cooked too rapidly, becomes a crackling to top the moist flakes. The marriage of salmon and asparagus is outstanding. To finish this combination, I have borrowed a warm, creamy sauce recipe from a very good friend, Mr Rick Stein. The recipe works equally well with most fish.



SERVES 4 AS A MAIN COURSE

24–28 medium asparagus spears
4 x 175g (6oz) portions of wild salmon fillet, pin-boned with skin on (scaled)
Salt and pepper
Flour, for dusting
2 tablespoons cooking oil
Knob of butter, plus more for brushing
Coarse sea salt (optional)

FOR THE MAYONNAISE

125ml (4fl oz) sunflower or groundnut oil
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 egg yolks
Juice of 1/2 lemon
Cayenne pepper
1 heaped teaspoon chopped tarragon

First make the mayonnaise, which can then be kept warm while completing the dish. Put the sunflower or groundnut oil and the olive oil in a small saucepan and place on a very low heat just to warm through. Mix the egg yolks and lemon juice with 2 tablespoons of water in a bowl, and place over a pan of simmering water, making sure the water is not touching the base of the bowl. Whisk the yolk mixture vigorously until thick and frothy, then continue to whisk until the frothy consistency becomes almost creamy. Remove the bowl from the heat and gradually whisk in the warmed oils. Once all the oil has been added, whisk in 2–3 tablespoons of warm water to loosen the thick sauce. This addition of extra water will prevent the oils and eggs from separating. If the sauce continues to thicken as it sets, simply add a little more water. Season with salt and cayenne pepper, adding the tarragon and setting aside to keep warm while cooking the salmon and asparagus.

Trim the spiky ears from along the asparagus stalks and break or cut the grey-white stalk base away, keeping the spears a uniform length. Season the salmon fillets with salt and pepper and lightly flour the skin sides only. Put a large pan of salted water on to boil.

Heat the cooking oil in a large frying pan and place the fillets in, skin-side down. Fry on a medium-hot heat for 6–7 minutes, not shaking or moving the fish, just allowing the skins to fry and crisp. Turn the fillets, add the knob of butter and remove the pan from the heat. The remaining residual heat will continue to cook the fish for a further few minutes, keeping the flesh moist and buttery.

After turning the salmon, plunge the asparagus tips into the large saucepan of rapidly boiling salted water. Cook for just 2–3 minutes, until tender; 4 minutes should be the maximum. Lift the spears from the pan, drain well and brush with butter to add more flavour and create a shine.

Place the spears side by side on plates and season with a sprinkle of coarse sea salt, if using. Sit the crispy salmon on top, offering the warm lemon and tarragon mayonnaise separately.

Cointreau Champagne Raspberries

These raspberries served almost iced on a hot day provide one of the 'coolest' and easiest of desserts.



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SERVES 4

450g (1lb) raspberries
1 teaspoon finely grated orange zest
3–4 tablespoons champagne
1 tablespoon icing sugar, plus more for sprinkling
2 tablespoons Cointreau

FOR THE VANILLA WHIPPED CREAM

1 vanilla pod
150ml (1/4 pint) double or whipping cream, chilled
1 heaped tablespoon icing sugar

Blend 100g (4oz) of the raspberries with the orange zest, 3 tablespoons of the champagne and the tablespoon of icing sugar, then strain through a fine sieve. This should now have a fairly loose raspberry-sauce consistency. The extra tablespoon of champagne can now be added for a stronger flavour, if needed. Chill until ready to serve.

Separate the remaining raspberries between four dessert glasses or bowls, then sprinkle each portion with icing sugar and the Cointreau. These can now also be refrigerated until needed.

To make the vanilla whipped cream, split the vanilla pod, scraping the seeds from each half. Add the seeds to the cream in a chilled bowl, along with the icing sugar. Whisk to a thick soft-peak stage and the cream is ready to serve. The addition of the icing sugar to the cream will help maintain the creamy consistency for up to one hour comfortably, providing it is kept refrigerated.

Just before serving, spoon the champagne raspberry sauce over each bowl of raspberries, offering them with the flavoured whipped cream.

