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KATHRYN AT HOME

Kathryn M. Ireland



GIBBS SMITH



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A GUIDE TO SIMPLE ENTERTAINING

Kathryn M. Ireland



Contents

Foreword, by Kate Betts	9
Preface, by Ithaka Roddam	10
Introduction, by Kathryn Ireland	13
Rise and Shine	17
To Market We Go	51
Lunch Under the Oak Tree	71
Al Fresco	119
Bring On the Guests	175
Photo Credits	223
Acknowledgments	224



Dining outdoors under a sprawling tree is a daily ritual at La Castellane and has its own particular charm. Sometimes in the summer it's too hot to do anything but sit, eat, and share chilled bottles of rosé. For the menu I gravitate to no-cook, no-sweat, group-friendly buffets - great bread, cheeses, Spanish ham, local foie gras, and sliced fruits. Perhaps gazpacho made from garden tomatoes blended with a liberal amount of my neighbor's homemade bay and pimento-infused olive oil. The spread starts out as appetizers but then evolves into lunch that lingers well into the afternoon.



For my money, there's nothing better than a cup of builder's tea around 4 pm.

Inspired by British builders, who refused to work a home without a kettle, the afternoon tea break is also a hallowed time of day for carpenters, painters, electricians, and decorators on the job. For entertaining, I always love a proper teatime, with pretty bone china cups and saucers served alongside crustless cucumber tea sandwiches and assorted dainties. But when I'm working an installation, I want my tea down and dirty. Builder's tea is a no-nonsense cuppa made with plain old black tea, like PG Tips, especially the Assam variety for head-clearing, full-bodied, industrial-strength flavor. Put two tea bags in a used, cracked mug. Add boiling water. Dump in a minimum of two teaspoons of sugar and a liberal slosh of whole milk. If you can't see the bottom of the mug, it's perfect. McVitie's digestive biscuits are the classic sidekick, but sometimes I cheat with a large slab of Fig Victoria Sponge Cake, page 106.





Flourless Hazelnut Chocolate Cake

I think I was about twelve years old when I made up the most delicious, rich chocolate cake — it was perfect. I didn't follow a recipe; I just made it up as I went along. The next day I tried to repeat it and it failed miserably. It was all good practice, though. Now I much prefer this cake made with hazelnut meal. —Ithaka

1 cup (200 g) dark cooking chocolate
1 cup (200 g) unsalted butter
6 eggs, separated
1 cup (200 g) fine granulated sugar
2 1/4 cups (250 g) ground hazelnuts
(hazelnut meal)
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Pinch of salt

FOR THE TOPPING:

1/4 cup (50 g) butter
2 teaspoons sugar
Pinch of salt
2 tablespoons whole hazelnuts
Whipped cream or crème fraîche, for
serving

Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Grease and lightly flour a cake pan.

Start by greasing a cake tin with butter and a very light layer of flour.

In a double boiler, melt the chocolate and butter on low heat; then set aside to cool.

Beat the egg yolks and sugar together with an electric mixer until they turn pale and creamy. Add the ground hazelnuts, baking powder, vanilla extract, and salt; mix well.

In a clean bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff peaks start to form.

Stir the chocolate and butter mixture into the main batter until well mixed. Then fold in the egg whites. Pour the batter into the prepared cake pan and bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until firm. Test for doneness by inserting a small knife tip or toothpick in the center. When cooked, remove cake from the oven and let cool for about 20 minutes.

For the topping, melt the butter with the sugar, salt, and hazelnuts until a caramel starts to form and the nuts become golden and toasted. When cooled, roughly chop the nuts and sprinkle over the cake. Serve with whipped cream or crème fraîche.



Al Fresco



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