



SUMMER
AT
Broadspear



In the first of a new series, we join TV chef Clodagh McKenna in her cottage garden and smallholding in the grounds of Highclere Castle

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On balmy summer evenings, chef and television presenter Clodagh McKenna loves sitting down to an alfresco feast in her garden. But if there's one thing she enjoys more than the entertaining, it's the prep: "I get up early and wander around to see what's looking its best. Are there aubergines I can smoke over hickory, or a glut of courgette flowers shouting to be stuffed with ricotta? The garden helps me plan the menu."

At this time of year, there's plenty of inspiration to be had. Raised beds are filled with plump broad beans, sprawling courgette plants and salad leaves in every shade of green. The old walls are covered with ripening raspberries and the greenhouse is a jungle of cucumbers, tomatoes and peppers.

The best thing about cooking with home-grown produce is that it shouldn't be complicated, says Clodagh. "When you put so much care into growing vegetables, you want the flavours to speak for themselves. People drown supermarket salad leaves in dressings because they don't taste of anything, but all fresh rocket needs is a squeeze of lemon and olive oil. If you grow a few tomato varieties – I love 'Sungold', 'Tigerella' and 'Costoluto Fiorentino' – they're wonderful simply sliced on a platter."

The simplicity of Clodagh's dishes also means she can prepare them in the garden. Standing in the shade of the pergola, she'll chop, char, stir and slice while butterflies dart among the beds. It's hard to believe this spot was an impenetrable mass of brambles just four years ago. Clodagh and husband Harry Herbert moved to Broadspear in 2017. The 300-year-old cottage sits in the grounds of Highclere Castle – owned by Harry's family since the 17th century – and was originally a folly.

Clodagh's childhood in Cork gave her a love of nature, then later on, visits to farmers' markets instilled a passion for sustainable produce. So when it came to overhauling the overgrown walled garden, a respectful restoration was essential. "It was a labour of love," she says. "We had to remove dead ivy with forks – anything else would have destroyed the bricks. It took four months and most of the cutlery drawer, but it was worth it."

Clodagh is a highly trained chef – attending the prestigious Ballymaloe cookery school – but gardening was not part of her extensive skill set. Instead, she had to learn along the way, ▶



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listening to podcasts, tuning in to *Gardeners' World* and finding support on social media. She has also learned through her mistakes. Gluts of broad beans taught her the importance of successional sowing (planting a smaller amount every couple of weeks) and blight on her first crop of outdoor tomatoes encouraged her to build a greenhouse, where she now grows everything from seed.

Leisurely lunches and relaxed suppers are enjoyed by family and friends throughout summer. Platters of salad, bowls of buttery new potatoes and slices of Broadspear beef are shared beneath the pergola. Its position in the centre of the garden, surrounded by the raised beds, was an important factor in Clodagh's design. "It needed to be a working space for growing and picking, but I wanted a space for enjoying it, too," she explains. She has applied the same approach to the greenhouse. Alongside a potting bench, there's a large rustic table and chairs. Here, Clodagh enjoys her morning coffee amid the fragrant basil, watering or potting before heading to work developing recipes or presenting in London. On summer evenings, it's the perfect spot for dinner. Candles illuminate the vines, while dogs Nolly and Alfie snooze under the table.

A circular and sustainable approach to the garden has seen wildlife return in abundance. A series of compost heaps, coupled with manure from Clodagh's cattle, provides feed for the vegetable beds, and the bordering pond and wild-flower meadow encourage insects that keep pests under control. "I'll happily eat breakfast, lunch and dinner out here," laughs Clodagh. "It's magical to sit and listen to the birds, see the colours and smell the plants. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else."

LOOK OUT FOR our autumn visit to Broadspear in the November issue. Meanwhile, find out more at clodaghmckenna.com or follow @clodagh_mckenna.

ROSEMARY, GARLIC AND LEMON ROASTIES

A match made in heaven – even the lemon skins add a glorious flavour to this super-simple side dish.

Preparation 10 minutes **Cooking** 40 minutes **Serves** 6

1.5KG POTATOES (MARIS PIPER OR KING EDWARD)
80ML OLIVE OIL
2 WHOLE BULBS OF GARLIC, HALVED
2 TBSP FRESH ROSEMARY, CHOPPED
1 LEMON, HALVED

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan oven) gas mark 6. Cut the potatoes into 5cm cubes and put them into a saucepan of cold salted water – just a small amount to allow them to steam. Bring to the boil and cook for 8-10 minutes; drain and set aside.
2 Pour 2 tbsp olive oil in a roasting dish set over a high hob. Add the par-cooked potatoes, garlic and rosemary, then season. Squeeze in the juice of the halved lemon and toss well (leaving the lemon skins in the dish).
3 Roast in the oven for 25 minutes until the potatoes are golden. Serve on a large, warmed serving platter. ▶





Aioli with fresh garden vegetable crudites (recipe overleaf)

“When you put so much care into growing vegetables, you want to let the flavours speak for themselves”



From farm TO FORK

Broadspear beef comes from Clodagh's herd of Aberdeen Angus cows. Alongside cattle, Clodagh keeps chickens and ducks – which required a daily 'bootcamp' to coax them into shape: "They wouldn't leave the duck house, so we had to physically herd them to the pond and back every day for weeks before they learnt to do it themselves," she says. Clodagh uses fresh eggs to make a big pavlova topped with ripe summer berries (overleaf): "When you keep chickens, you really notice a difference in the egg whites. They fluff up so well." ▶

Barbecue rump with salsa verde (recipe overleaf)

AIOLI WITH FRESH GARDEN VEGETABLE CRUDITÉS

Just-picked veg from the garden served with this creamy garlic mayo is one of my favourite starters. So simple and it lets all the fresh flavours shine through.

Preparation 15 minutes **Serves** 6

2 BURFORD BROWN EGG YOLKS
1 TSP DIJON MUSTARD
100ML EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
100ML VEGETABLE OIL JUICE AND ZEST OF ½ LEMON

1 TBSP MIXED FRESH HERBS (SUCH AS BASIL, FLAT-LEAF PARSLEY AND/OR MINT), FINELY CHOPPED
1 GARLIC CLOVE, CRUSHED
FRESH VEGETABLES SUCH AS CARROTS, RADISHES AND CUCUMBERS

1 Put the yolks and mustard in a bowl and lightly whisk.
2 Slowly whisk the oils into the egg yolks – the mixture will start to thicken and become creamy.
3 Stir in the lemon juice and zest, herbs and garlic. Season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper. Serve with plenty of fresh crunchy vegetables from the garden.



BARBECUE RUMP WITH SALSA VERDE

I use the meat here from my own herd – ask your butcher for grass-fed beef.

Preparation 15 minutes
Cooking about 6 minutes, plus resting **Serves** 6

1 X WHOLE 800G RUMP STEAK
OLIVE OIL

FOR THE SALSA VERDE
1 TBSP WHITE WINE VINEGAR
4 SPRIGS FRESH BASIL, LEAVES TORN
2 SPRIGS OF FLAT-LEAF PARSLEY, ROUGHLY CHOPPED
2 GARLIC CLOVES, CRUSHED
2 ANCHOVY FILLETS, CHOPPED
2 TBSP CAPERS, CHOPPED
80ML EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

1 To make the salsa verde, put all the ingredients into a mixing bowl and stir together. Set aside.
2 When your barbecue is at a good high heat (or preheat a griddle pan until hot if cooking indoors), sprinkle the steak with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, then brush with olive oil. Cook for 3 minutes each side for medium rare. Rest for 10 minutes.
3 Thinly slice the steak and transfer to a large serving platter. Drizzle the salsa verde over the meat.

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ROSEWATER PAVLOVA WITH SOFT SUMMER BERRIES

Use the leftover egg yolks to make a fabulous mayonnaise or ice cream.

Preparation 30 minutes **Cooking** 1 hour 30 minutes
Serves 6-8

FOR THE PAVLOVA
6 BRADDOCK WHITE DUCK EGG WHITES
300G CASTER SUGAR
2 TSP CORNFLOUR
1 TSP WHITE WINE VINEGAR
1 TBSP ROSEWATER

FOR THE FILLING
500ML WHIPPING CREAM
1 TBSP ICING SUGAR
1 TBSP ROSEWATER
200G FRESH RASPBERRIES/LOGANBERRIES
SPRIGS OF REDCURRANTS

1 Preheat the oven to 160°C (140°C fan oven) gas mark 3 and line a baking tray with greaseproof paper.
2 Whisk the egg whites in a clean, dry bowl with electric hand beaters (or in a free-standing food mixer) until firm peaks form. Gradually add the caster sugar, 1 tsp at a time, whisking constantly until the mixture is thick and glossy and the sugar completely dissolves. Add the cornflour, white wine vinegar and the rosewater and gently fold until just combined.
3 Spoon the mixture onto the prepared baking tray in a circle shape and use the back of the spoon to shape the meringue into a nest. Put the meringue in the oven and turn the temperature down to 140°C (120°C fan oven) gas mark 1 and bake for 1½ hours – lower the oven temperature further if the meringue starts to brown. Once baked, turn off the heat, open the oven door and leave it to cool completely.
4 Once the meringue is cooled and ready to serve, assemble the filling (don’t add the cream too far in advance as it will soak into the meringue). Gently whip the cream until it thickens, then whisk in the icing sugar. Fold in the rosewater, then spoon the filling into the centre of the meringue. Top with the fresh summer berries. Add some extra fresh redcurrants to decorate.

FOOD DIRECTOR ALISON WALKER. HOME ECONOMIST SUE HENDERSON. HAIR AND MAKE-UP NATASHA FROM ARTLINGTON TALENT

Clodagh's TOP TIPS FOR SUMMER SUPPERS ALFRESCO

- Choose a sheltered spot** Either naturally by a tree or a structure like a pergola.
- Get robust furniture that's weatherproof** If you have to spend ages setting it up, you probably won't use it very often.
- Add some gentle lighting** Solar fairy lights, lanterns hanging from trees and flickering candles all add ambience.
- Think flowers** Decorate with garden blooms to bring a seasonal flourish as well as colour, scent and texture. I use cosmos, dahlias, delphiniums and sweet peas in summer.
- And think herbs** Pots of rosemary and thyme, arranged on the tabletop, look pretty and smell wonderful. A big bowl of tomatoes adds a vibrant splash of colour, while sculptural artichokes or even a bunch of radishes in a glass jar can look great.
- Waste not, want not** Fruit and vegetable decorations can be used up the next day when you're cooking.

