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Opening Extract from...

From Virgin to Veteran

How to Get Cooking with Confidence

Written by Sam Stern

Published by Quadrille Publishing Ltd

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VIRGIN TO VETERAN

IS A COOKBOOK WITH A DIFFERENCE.

Written by Sam Stern, the 21-year-old prodigy with 5 successful cookbooks already to his name, it is a contemporary cookery masterclass designed to get today's teens, 20- and 30-somethings into the kitchen and cooking with confidence. The way Sam sees it, there are only so many meals you'll ever cook, so you really should learn how to make each one special. From mastering the basics to insider tips and techniques, *Virgin to Veteran* will teach you everything you need to become a confident cook.

Starting with Virgin Kitchen Set-Up (the stuff you need to know to set up a workable kitchen) Virgin to Veteran moves on through 10 chapters each focusing on a particular ingredient or food group. Diagrams and step-by-step guides demonstrate relevant skills such as knife work, sauce making and baking, while other key areas such as sourcing and substituting ingredients, seasonality and the secrets of great presentation are also covered. From fast food to slow, food to go or eat in, healthy to greedy, there's something in the over 100 Masterclass recipes featured to match every mood, budget and lifestyle. And once you've learned how to cook using a particular ingredient or technique, Sam will show other ways that you can put your newfound skills to good use. Learn how to master a Tagliatelle Ragu, for example, and you'll have added a Classic Lasagne to your culinary arsenal too. Crammed full of information presented in an engaging, accessible way, ***Virgin to Veteran*** teaches you the classic skills, techniques and recipes, updates them to suit how we live now and will have you turning out brilliant meals without too much fuss, cost or effort before you know it.

SAM STERN

21-year-old Sam Stern is studying Politics, Sociology and Business at Edinburgh University. He is also the author of 5 bestselling cookbooks which currently dominate the teenage market, and has been cooking for as long as he can remember. What started as a personal passion for cooking (and fierce kitchen competition with his older brother) turned into a mission to inspire his generation to cook. *Cooking Up A Storm* (2005), *Real Food Real Fast* (2006), *Get Cooking* (2007), *Sam Stern's Student Cookbook* (2008) and *Eat Vegetarian* (2010) were published by Walker Books to great critical acclaim while Sam was studying for his GCSE's and A levels. *Cooking up a Storm* has been translated into 14 languages, with worldwide sales nudging 700,000 copies. The books and associated activity have attracted global media attention and have given Sam a unique status as *the* voice for keen young cooks.

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BRUSCHETTA

HEALTHY FAST FEEDS TWO

Italian for great-tasting stuff on toast or fried or nicely charred griddled bread. Here are three sweet toppings, which work whether you're cooking for yourself or the masses. Check out the Carpaccio toppings (see p98) – they're good on bruschetta too.

INGREDIENTS

4 slices 2.5 cm thick bread – ciabatta/ French stick/country loaf
a little olive oil for frying
a clove of garlic, cut widthways

TIP

Try rubbing the bread with a lemon, or a fresh herb like rosemary or basil.

PREP

Make your topping of choice (see below).

COOK

Put a griddle pan on to high heat. Brush the bread lightly with oil. Griddle for a minute or two on each side till crisp and marked up.

PLATE

Rub each bit of bread with the cut clove of garlic before spooning over your chosen topping.

TOPPING 1
BROAD BEAN & WENSLEYDALE

INGREDIENTS

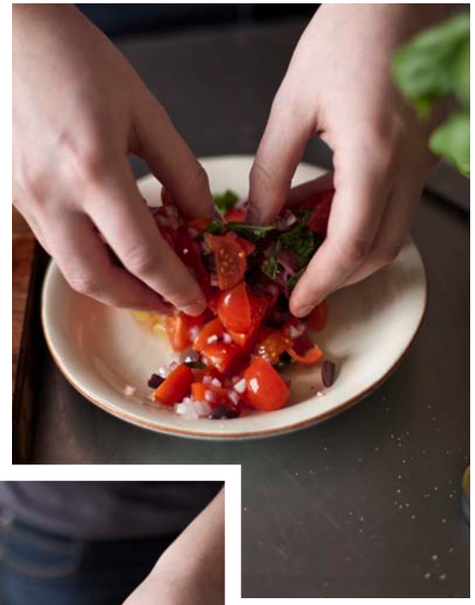
salt and black pepper
110g broad beans (shelled weight) frozen or fresh
30g Wensleydale cheese, crumbled into small pieces
3 teaspoons olive oil
2 teaspoons lemon juice

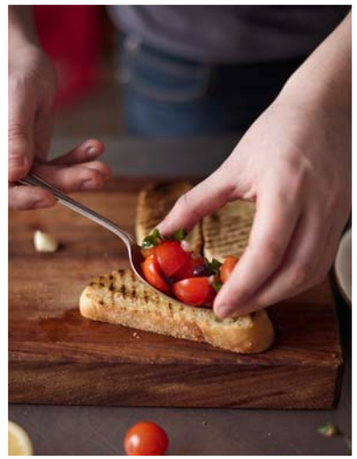
Put a pan of water onto heat with a good pinch of salt. Bring to the boil. Add your beans and simmer for 5–6 minutes till done. (If you're not sure if the beans are ready, remove one and try it.) Drain the beans in a colander or sieve and cool under running water.

Now, remove the tough outer skin to reveal the inner bean. Find the bit of spare skin on the edge, and squeeze it (like a spot). The innards should pop out easily into a bowl beneath.

Once you're done, add the cheese, oil and lemon. Roughly mash the mix using a fork against the side of the bowl, leaving some good chunks. Taste and season lightly, adjusting oil and lemon if you need.







TOPPING 2
TOMATO & BLACK OLIVE

Sit the tomatoes on a board. Slice in half lengthwise with a sharp knife. Slice in half again and tip them into a bowl.

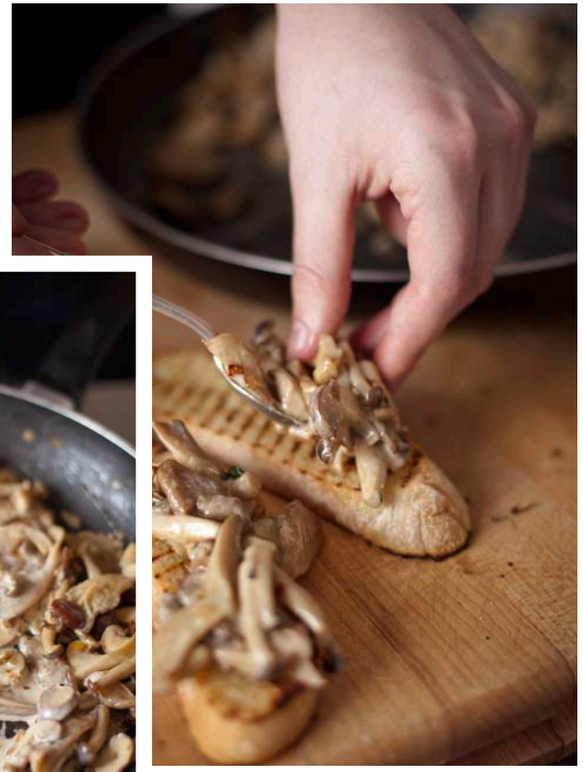
Slice or chop the olives. If the stones are still in, remove them first by cutting round using a small, sharp knife. Add to the bowl with the shallot.

Add the oil, salt, sugar, pepper and a few rocket or basil leaves, if you like, and mix well.

INGREDIENTS

8–12 good-quality cherry or baby plum tomatoes (a red & yellow mix is good)
6 black olives
½ a small shallot, diced
1 tablespoon olive oil
a pinch of salt
a pinch of sugar
a little black pepper
a few rocket or basil leaves (optional)







TOPPING 3
HOT MIXED MUSHROOMS

INGREDIENTS

350g exotic/interesting mixed mushrooms (e.g. portobella, chestnut, oyster)
50g butter
olive oil
1 small shallot, finely diced
1 fat clove of garlic, crushed
½ a small glass of dryish white wine
a small pinch of dried thyme
salt and black pepper
1 ½ tablespoons double cream/crème fraiche
a small squeeze of lemon juice

Rub the mushrooms with a bit of barely damp kitchen towel to clean, if needed. Don't wash them. Trim away the raggedy base of the stems, if necessary, and slice uniformly into 1cm thick pieces.

Put a heavy-bottomed medium frying pan on to medium heat. Add the butter and a drop or two of oil (the combination helps stop the butter burning). Add the shallot and garlic. Cook, stirring with a wooden spoon, for a minute or two. Increase the heat, adding the wine (the heat burns off the alcohol and mellows the taste). Watch as it bubbles and the wine evaporates.

Add the thyme and mushrooms and lower the heat. Cook, stirring for 2–3 minutes, until the mushrooms are soft but still holding their shape. Season to taste. Remove from the heat and stir-through the cream. Squeeze over the lemon juice when spooning over the bruschetta.

BEEF

and me go way back: steaks, roasts, cottage pies, marrow roasted up and straight from the bone, beef raw and naked as Carpaccio – you name it, I've cooked and eaten it. I guess it's in the blood, coming as I do from a farming family. The cow (steer, heifer) is a magnificent beast and beef's a quintessentially British meat. Treat it with respect and nothing beats it. This big, bold ingredient is a pleasure to cook. From that moment when you catch your butcher's eye across the counter and you both know it's a case of beef love (and maybe the start of a very special retail relationship) – to serving up the finished dish to family and friends. Get your skills right and it's all good.

COOKING TIMES FOR YOUR STEAK
A ROUGH GUIDE

It's dependent on type of cut, thickness and heat so this is approximate.
For a steak that's 2.5 cm/1 inch thick and at room temperature:



RARE
1–2 minutes



MEDIUM
3 minutes



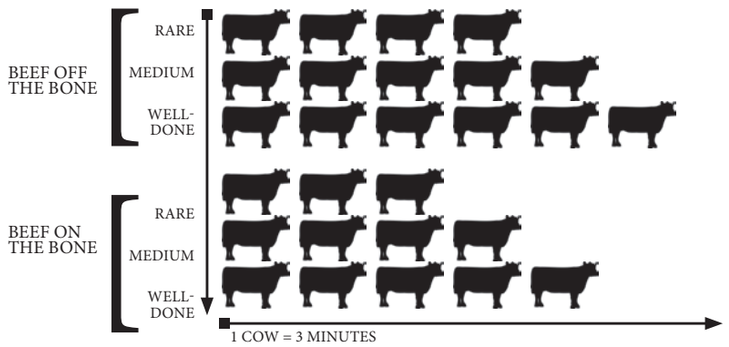
MEDIUM-RARE
2–2 ½ minutes



WELL-DONE
4 minutes

COOKING TIMES FOR YOUR ROAST

For each 450g/1lb meat allow



MOO-TRITION

BRILLIANT FOR:

PROTEIN
BUILDS MUSCLE & BODY STRENGTH

ZINC
BOOSTS IMMUNE SYSTEM, HEALS WOUNDS, BOOSTS SKIN & HAIR

IRON
helps carry oxygen to all body cells & muscles to fight fatigue; keeps you sharp & focused; eat with vitamin c rich foods to beat anaemia

Phosphorus
STRONGER TEETH & BONES

VITAMIN B12
attacks anaemia and helps central nervous system

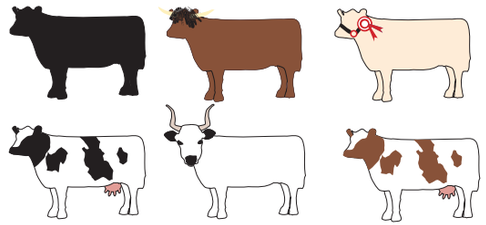
OMEGA 3S
FOUND IN GRASS-FED BEEF AIDS BRAIN FUNCTION

FAT EQUALS FLAVOUR
BUT TRIM IF IT MATTERS; USE TOPSIDE, FILLET AND RUMP, MINCE YOUR OWN. GRIDDLE GRILL OR ROAST ON A RACK FOR LOWER-FAT.

HERE'S WHAT TO LOOK FOR

BREED AND SOURCE OF BEEF

Butchers (and best supermarkets) often stock locally reared beef and will label or advertise the breed. I love the rich flavour of Aberdeen Angus and Hereford but these meats are much more expensive. So treat yourself when you can or get a cheaper cut of that meat. Otherwise, use the rules and use your judgement. A meat that's local will usually have come from a happier cow by the way. I don't fuss too much about organic but I'd rather not eat meat that's clocked up air miles.

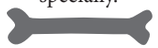


BUTCHERS LOVE A BIT OF CHAT AND WILL TO TELL YOU WHAT THEY KNOW SO NEVER BE INTIMIDATED – GET IN THERE. IF YOU'RE NOT SURE WHAT YOU WANT OR CAN'T SEE WHAT YOU NEED, JUST ASK. THOSE BIG FRIDGES AT THE BACK OF THE SHOP WILL BE FULL OF MEAT, OFTEN THE MORE UNUSUAL CUTS. GO WITH A PLAN AND SEE WHAT'S LOOKING GOOD OR BUY TO BUDGET AND ASK THEM TO RECOMMEND. WHEN I'M BUYING BEEF HERE'S WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR...



BONES

are essential for stocks and the butcher will hand them out for free. It's likely he or she will only have them in on butchering/delivery days so check when that is or go in and order some specially.



MINCE

If buying mince from a butcher check that it's freshly made as it spoils quickly. Better to buy the right cut (see opposite) mince your own and even mix them up for great flavour.



COLOUR OF MEAT Don't just point at a joint or gaze at the top. Ask to look at the side of the meat so you can judge the colour. You want a deep red with a network or marbling of creamy white fat throughout. It's an indicator of quality, a tender juiciness and flavour to come. If it looks grey, slimy or a uniform bright red colour then get out of there. The fat should be creamy white.

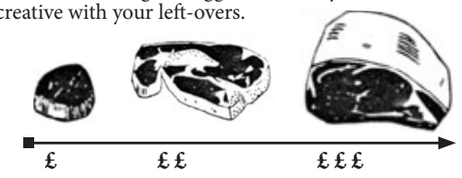
SUPERMARKETS

Choose one with a butchery counter if you can so you can get into conversation and see the meat properly. If you're just grabbing a steak or joint off the shelf, no problem, just use the rules, take a bit of time to weigh up the options and use your skill-set to cook it right

BOUGHT IT

TAKE OFF ANY OUTER WRAPPING AND STORE ON A PLATE, COVERED LOOSELY, AWAY FROM COOKED STUFF.
MEAT LASTS 3-5 DAYS IN THE FRIDGE.
IF FREEZING MEAT DO SO IMMEDIATELY AFTER PURCHASING

HOW MUCH If you don't know how much of a meat to buy, say 'I'm cooking for so many..' and your butcher will tell you what you need. If the steaks on display are too big, ask for a smaller one and they'll cut it for you and you can specify size. Very small roasting joints shrink, so get a bigger one than you need and be creative with your left-overs.



AGE OF MEAT

Hanging meat over time matures the flavour. The majority is wet-hung (vac packed) to speed the process so it's cheaper. Dry-aged meat is hung naturally for a fuller flavour and tenderness but as it takes longer it's a more expensive meat. Well-hung is darker, often purple and will taste amazing – your choice.

ULTIMATE STEAK & THE WORKS

HEALTHY FAST FEEDS TWO

You're only allowed to cook this if you satisfy two conditions. One: get the best meat cash allows – preferably from a butcher so you can chat over options. Two: rest it properly after cooking with the butter and mustard. This makes all the difference.

INGREDIENTS

2 great steaks – choice of sirloin, rump, rib-eye, fillet
1 clove of garlic, peeled & cut across
a splash of good olive or vegetable oil
salt and black pepper
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard (or to taste)
2 teaspoons soft butter
THE WORKS
tomatoes
chips, shop-bought or homemade (see overleaf)
horseradish sauce
green salad (see overleaf)

PREP Get the steaks from the fridge. Leave on any fatty edge to maximise flavour and keep it juicy or cut it off after cooking. Otherwise, trim close with a sharp knife. Rub gently all over with the cut garlic and oil to tenderise the meat. Add a few grinds of black pepper to sweeten but no salt at this stage. Leave to get to room temperature while you prep your accompaniments.

Just before cooking, get a large dinner plate. On one side, put a teaspoon of the mustard and a teaspoon of the butter. Add a generous pinch of salt and more pepper. Do the same on the other side of the plate. You'll be using this for fast saucing/ seasoning once your steaks are cooked and resting.

COOK Get a heavy bottomed frying pan big enough to take the steaks. Put it on to high. Once it's almost smoking, bang the steaks down. If you're not sure if the heat's right, just touch the side of one steak to the pan – it should sizzle.

Cook for the required time to suit your tastes, the cut of meat, its thickness and temperature. For medium-rare, I give a 1-inch thick steak 2 minutes on one side (don't shift it – you want that crust and colour) then turn with tongs or a spatula and cook again for 2 minutes. For a thicker steak, turn for another minute, then repeat. Really thick steaks may need finishing off in a hot oven for a minute or two so make sure yours is pre-heated if you've got a big piece of cow there.

Steaks continue to cook a bit as they rest, so take them out of the pan just before they get to the perfect stage for your taste. Place each one on its pile of seasonings on the dinner plate, turning once. Rest somewhere warm for 4 minutes to ensure your steak will be tender.

PLATE Plate the steaks up with all their lovely flavoursome juices. Serve with bread to mop up and a simple green or tomato salad. Or eat with the works – roast whole vine tomatoes, shallow-fry chips, salad and horseradish sauce.

✶✶✶✶✶ CASH SAVER ✶✶✶✶✶

Make your steak go further by bashing and roll cheaper rump and skirt steaks between layers of cling film with a rolling pin to get them thinner. Pan-fry or griddle for 1 minute per side. Season, rest and serve as before and serve with more veg.

TIME SAVER

Thin your steak as above. Cook and slap it in a warm Panini or in good bread for a sandwich with mustard/horseradish/ ketchup/salad or a fried egg.

TIP

If you want to grill your steak, cut all but 1cm of fat from the edge so it doesn't flare up in the heat. Snip remaining fat with scissors so it stays flat. Brush with oil, garlic, herbs. Cook and turn under high heat to suit your taste.
To BBQ: sit steak over medium/ash white coals. Sit on oiled rack for 4 minutes before sliding a spatula under to shift and turn it. Cook for another 4 minutes.



BEETROOT RISOTTO

HEALTHY FAST FEEDS TWO

With its shocking colour and sound flavour, this one's quite the exhibitionist. I love the layers of flavour and texture that the stir-ins and toppings give the risotto here, but keep it nice and simple if that's how you like it. Serve as a main course, starter or a lovely little extra alongside a nice bit of beef or oily fish like salmon or mackerel.

INGREDIENTS

225–275g fresh uncooked beetroot
2 shallots
2 fat cloves garlic
850ml chicken stock or vegetable stock (see p64)
35g butter
a splash of olive oil
175g Vialone Nano/Carnaroli/Arborio Risotto Rice
3/4 small glass of white wine
a little fresh thyme (optional)
salt and black pepper
juice of ½ a lemon
50g parmesan or vegetarian equivalent
a knob of butter

STIR-INS

50g crumbled blue cheese
1 tablespoon mascarpone, cream or crème fraiche
a few baby spinach or rocket leaves

TOPPINGS

grated parmesan, crumbled goats cheese or Lancashire cheese
sour cream or natural yoghurt
a few toasted walnuts
fried goat's cheese slices (see p97)
blue cheese & herb croquettes

BONUS BITES

BLUE CHEESE & HERB CROQUETTES

Mix a bit of fried shallot, a pinch of dried sage or diced fresh, some crumbled blue cheese like dolcelatte/stilton. Roll into 4 mini-logs, about 2.5 cm. Roll in flour, dip in beaten egg and coat in breadcrumbs (see p75). While the risotto is resting, fry the croquettes in groundnut, vegetable or sunflower oil for a minute or so per side until golden outside, melting inside. Drain on kitchen paper and serve on top of the risotto.

PREP Cut the leaves away from the beet. Wash the roots, put them into a pan and cover with cold water. Boil till tender and easily pierced with a knife – allow 20 minutes for smaller beet. Set aside to cool.

Dice the shallots and garlic with a small sharp knife. (If making the cheese croquettes for your topping, prep a little extra). Pour the chicken or vegetable stock into a pan, bring it to the boil then lower to a simmer.

Peel the beet. Chop and put into a blender with 4 tablespoons of hot stock to blitz or use a fast handblender to make a thick, smooth puree.

Prep your choice of stir-ins or toppings. (For Blue Cheese & Herb Croquettes see Bonus Bites).

COOK Put a second pan on to heat. Add the butter and oil. Once hot, add the shallot and garlic, stirring with a wooden spoon. Reduce the heat to low and sweat the mix very gently for 5 minutes so the onion softens, but doesn't burn.

Tip the rice into the pan and stir well to coat it. Cook for a minute, stirring. Increase the heat. Add the wine and stir till it's almost absorbed then add a large ladle full of hot stock immediately. Add the thyme now.

Reduce the heat to medium so the mix keeps bubbling a bit but doesn't cook too fiercely as it absorbs the new liquid. Once absorbed, add another ladle of stock and keep stirring. Repeat until the stock is just about used and the rice is just about cooked (test a grain – the end result wants to be soft but with a tiny bit of texture and the risotto itself should neither be stiff and dry nor wet and soupy, but loose and delicious). This could take 15–20 minutes but it's worth it. Add salt, pepper and lemon juice.

Stir in two-thirds of the beetroot puree. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Add the rest of the puree now or as a topping, plus your choice of stir-in and half the parmesan. Stir in the butter and/or cream to make it glossy. Taste and adjust. Turn off the heat and put the lid on the pan. Rest it for 3 minutes.

PLATE Spoon the risotto into warm shallow bowls and finish with the remaining parmesan and your choice of toppings.



