

Recipe

Olive and I sat on the sofa together watching TV. We snacked on these and threw the shells into a bowl at our feet — it sounded a bit like chattering teeth as each shell hit the bowl in quick succession. There are lots of names for the many different clams, but they all clam up: the vongoles and the pippies alike. If they open after they cook, they're good to eat; just throw away any that don't open. This dish goes well with spaghetti and a little bit of cheese. In Brisbane recently I recooked this pasta dish the next morning in a frypan with a grating of hard, dried-out goat's cheese (called a Crottin in France). The strong taste of the goat's cheese complemented the clams perfectly, especially with some extra lemon juice.

Pippies, Clams or Vongole Pasta With Garlic & Parsley

150g of spaghetti
2 big cloves of garlic
olive oil
30g butter
1kg of clams, vongole or pippies
1 cup of water
a big handful of parsley, roughly chopped
juice of a lemon
salt and pepper
Parmesan for grating

Boil a big pan of water, add the spaghetti and cook until just al dente. Drain and leave to one side. In the same saucepan fry the roughly chopped garlic in some oil and butter until it just turns brown; add the clams and a cup of water. Boil on high heat until the clams start to open up (this only takes a couple of minutes). Add the parsley, lemon juice and lots of salt and pepper. Add the pasta and give it a big stir. Serve in the dish with a sprinkling of Parmesan and a big bowl to throw the shells into.

Delicious Pasta

This dish goes well with spaghetti and a little bit of cheese



In Defence of Food by Michael Pollen

The Myth of Nutrition and The Pleasures of Eating

Michael's philosophy is: 'Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.' He, like me, loathes processed foods and the brainwash-type claims that they're good for your health. In this book he explains how to eat better as well as how we forgot to eat well in the first place. Using the United States as a back-drop he takes us back from nutritionalism and western diets and food cultures to just eating not too much. Anybody who wants to get healthy and lose a bit of weight would do well heeding what Michael has to say.



MANNA FROM HEAVEN
HANDMADE IN AUSTRALIA



April & May

And the rain keeps coming down, almost every day. On the way to school Olive and my brightly coloured umbrellas have been having the time of their lives showing off down Norton Street.

Have you ever taken a look at the milk section in the supermarket? There's low fat, zero fat, semi-skimmed and then there are all the milks that are not milk but pretend to be milk. I thought milk came from cows or breasts. The supermarkets of the world have gone along with the scientists, who fiddled around with basic milk and added so-called improvements by processing it, and now they make all sorts of health claims for their products. It's easy to be confused and end up wondering which one to take home. Personally I am going for the one labelled 'organic'; so far at Coles there is no low fat organic milk — which would be a true horror if ever there was one.

Five months ago, Olive decided she did not want to eat animals any more. This really came from her love of furry creatures (Pickles and Purry are cats); thankfully she said she would still eat fish, but it was out with the duck and chicken — two of her favourite things to eat. Particularly confit of duck. One night in the early days Darren brought round a roast chicken. Olive said she felt like a cat having a mouse dangled in front of her, she so wanted it.

Now, six months later, she is still hankering for fowl but I don't cook it at home unless she's at her dad's. (I am okay: when I go out for lunch or dinner it's often what I choose. I had some delicious organic turkey at Sean's Panorama the other night.) But this turn away from meat has made me look at Olive's diet. Of course I want to make sure she is getting enough protein, and then I want to make sure she does not become a carbohydrate junkie as so many vegetarians do, sprinkling cheese on everything. Someone said Olive looked thin (actually she had just grown about four inches), so Simon, her dad, suggested we give her supplements. I listened to his liturgy and settled on a few iron tablets every week. Then I needed to remind myself that I already know what a good diet is — it's good food.

I know that dieting makes you fat; I know that excess of anything — even some things that people claim are healthy — could make you sick. In America and here in Australia you see stuff in the supermarket that's labelled '97% fat free' ... meaning that it's actually 3% fat. Two things are wrong here: the labelling makes people think that the products are low in fat; and the marketing people are playing with us the consumer and helping their sales by making out that fat is bad. As any good cook knows, fat is what brings out the flavour of ingredients and adds richness and taste to food. It also helps you digest food better. And it's simply not a problem in the quantities I'm talking about. Think about a tomato sauce: would you make it with half olive oil to half tomatoes? No, it would be far too greasy. Maybe a ratio of 1 oil to 10 tomatoes would be more like it for taste and diet. I don't need a nutritionist to tell me what's right; I am doing it naturally.

Back to Olive: I have relaxed. Sure, we now eat a little more fish at home than we used to, but basically it's all the same. Zero or very little processed food, fresh fruit and lots of vegetables, potatoes and pasta and of course a little bit of chocolate everyday.



passionfruit & raspberry coconut ice

Special of The Month

Small squares of coconut and fruit in yellow and pink, these sweet fruit confections are lovely with a short black in the morning for a quick sugar hit or later after dinner. Come try them at the next Growers' Market in Pyrmont.

David Guseford



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