

Melting pots

Seven cooks, introduced to a world of cuisines through family, travel and love, show how bringing different cultures together creates delicious results

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LETITIA CLARK

The chef, food writer and illustrator moved to Sardinia, for love then fell just as hard for the food, culture and climate

"Living here is a bit like stepping back in time," says Letitia Clark of her new life on the Italian island of Sardinia. "Family is still so important – it takes precedence over everything. No one has much money but everyone helps each other out. One person will swap some wine from the tiny vineyard at the bottom of their garden for some cheese from their neighbour. You never need a lot because there is a lot of sharing and giving."

The decision to up sticks from London and exchange a successful career in cheffing for a gentler existence of illustrating and writing in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea came after she met Luca, "a small, round Sardinian". The move has been a revelation. "Food is such an important part of the culture here. In London, food culture can be quite negative – the prominence of 'clean eating', the fads and obsession with being a certain way and size. Here it's about cooking for family and community."

"I'm learning how to make ravioli from Luca's 90-year-old grandmother, while I've introduced them to butter. I'm from the West Country so I love dairy but here olive oil is the only way. So I made roast chicken and put anchovy butter in it and

they loved it. They don't have proper stodgy cakes here either, so at Christmas I made them a really traditional English cake but put in local sour cherries rather than glacé. Everyone adored it.

"It's made me rediscover my own cooking culture too, and think about what my mother made – it all comes together in this wonderful cycle. My understanding of food has improved, and it's changed the way both Luca and I cook. There's strength in learning about other people's recipes, ideas, and memories. We're better together."

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