

## Personal Culinary

### In lieu of a foreword

During the Swedish parliamentary elections, one of the parties had the following pre-election campaign. They printed recipes by female members of this party in their campaign literature and distributed them among the population. Just imagine if something like that had happened in our country. The following day, there would have been an outcry. 'They are mocking people who are hungry or poor. This is no time for gastronomy when the price of bread is going up' and so on.

But in my opinion, sharing recipes is a very personal and beautiful gesture. It's the sort of teaching that won't get on your nerves like instructions can sometimes do.

But why am I writing all this? On my wedding day, I was given many colourful and glossy cookery books. They were all quality publications but none of them was any good. Cookery books should awaken our taste buds, make us smell the aroma of dishes, and develop a desire to find out more. But these books weren't like that. They were exactly like the formulaic maths textbooks of school. Recipes are one reason why I love people. One such person was a writer called Barbare Jorjadze who lived in nineteenth century Georgia. That lady is my muse.

I have disliked porridge since childhood, but there's one version of porridge I always eat which is described as 'sour porridge, very tasty, with gooseberries'. This is one of the recipes in *The Complete Cuisine*, Barbare's cookery book. I love women like her, women who are not afraid of their passionate taste buds.

As well as liberty and a happy life, freedom of choice, love, opportunities for fulfilment and world peace, people also need vanilla cream. I learned this in my early childhood when once I attended a birthday party for my classmate. There, they had the most beautiful, dream cake, decorated with lilacs at a time when everyone was surviving on strange green bread and horrible margarine. I waited stoically for the cake to be cut. Finally, a slice was placed on my plate and... To this very day, I am unable to forget the taste of rancid butter.

God save us from celebrations that go disastrously wrong.

### Tastes and People

Everyone has their own way of remembering things.

One of my friends always remembers strangers in the street on the basis of the matching colours of their clothes. When my granny visited someone's house and stayed overnight, she always remembered precisely in each house how well the bed linen they offered her to sleep on had been starched. My granny remembers each of her school teachers individually, as well as members of their immediate families and more distant relatives. My neighbour remembers the words in advertisements, Leka remembers perfumes, Zaza, numbers, Keto, personalities and me, I remember tastes.

So, I want to tell you about these tastes I remember. It's January outside, that's to say the month when you think more than ever about your old acquaintances or friends, classmates, or fellow university students, people you meet by chance or those who exist for you in one quick, pleasant flash of life.

You won't find any recipes for cooking in this book. Today I want to tell you about recipes for people.

### **Bitter, Sweet and Precious**

'Is it possible not to write about chocolate?!' I said and left the bedroom on tip-toes so as not to wake up my four month old baby. I look into his little cradle before leaving the room. It's peaceful for now. He's asleep. He's playing with angels in his dreams. He's frowning then smiling. I can watch him for hours.

What do chocolate and my little boy have in common? That's a question a reader may ask. They have a lot in common. They have the same mixture of sweetness and bitterness, they can both keep you awake, and you can never have enough of them. The title of my first book is *Chocolate* and my son has round, shiny eyes like hazelnuts in chocolate. As well as that, both of them are gifts given at New Year.

My son was born on the 1st January and 1st January in my personal calendar of celebration is a chocolate day. In Georgia, you never have so much chocolate as on the morning of the New Year. Today I want to give you recipes for chocolate and tell you about my baby boy with his puckered cheeks.

### **Sweet**

He is at his sweetest when he has just woken up. His cheeks are ruddy and his neck smells especially delicious. At this time of day, he is in a very good mood and he bumbles in his limited repertoire of baby noises, making pleasant sounds.

## **Recipe**

### **Hot Chocolate with Strawberries**

#### **Ingredients:**

Cocoa powder - 1/3 cup

Sugar - 6 tablespoons

A pinch of salt

Boiled water - 1/3 cup

Vanilla – on the tip of a knife

Cream - half a cup

200g strawberries

Rum - 2 tablespoons

Orange peel – a pinch

As many strawberries as you can spare

In a small saucepan, mix the cocoa, sugar and salt and, gradually adding some boiled water, stir. Boil for two minutes, add some milk and warm through without allowing the contents to boil. Add the pinch of vanilla and whipped cream, continue stirring. Allow to cool.

Wash the strawberries, add a little sugar, soak in rum, and leave them like that for a while. Put them into glasses and pour over the hot chocolate and sprinkle with the orange peel.

## **Bitter**

Oh, how bitter he can be sometimes, when he wants a hundred things at once and it's impossible to work out what to do, why he's crying, why he whinges, why it is impossible to calm him down, why he does not respond to your caresses, and you walk from room to room, rocking him, singing to him, saying silly things to him, well, to come to the point, it is bitter, very bitter but, still, very delicious.

## **Recipe**

Black Chocolate Cream with Cinnamon, Almonds and Pepper

#### **Ingredients:**

Dark chocolate – two bars

Cinnamon

200g grated almond

Chilli pepper

Flour- 4 tablespoons

Milk- two cups

Melt the chocolate, add some milk and bring the mixture to the boil on a very low heat. Stir and add the flour gradually, continuing to stir.

Season with pepper and cinnamon. Add some of the grated almond to the chocolate mixture and heat it through. Sprinkle with the remaining almonds on the chocolate when it has been poured into cups.

### **A Simple Chocolate Cake**

Everything seems so unimportant when you are eating chocolate cake and drinking hot coffee: unfinished theses, missed lectures, an abandoned job, the Portuguese language half-learned and carrying excess kilos.

#### **Recipe**

##### **Chocolate Cake with Pears**

##### **Ingredients:**

150g butter

2 eggs

300g white flour

100g caster sugar

100g chocolate

120g plain yoghurt

3 sour pears

A pinch of cinnamon

2 or 3 ground cloves

A few drops of vanilla essence

Beat the butter, sugar and eggs together thoroughly. Then add flour, vanilla, small pieces of chocolate and yoghurt, and mix together well.

Warm a baking tin to 180 degrees C. Grease the tin with butter and place baking paper on it, grease the paper too. Place half of the pastry in the tin, put pieces of pear on it, and pour some melted butter onto the pieces of pear, sprinkle with cinnamon and cloves. Bake it for 45 minutes. When it is ready pour melted chocolate over the top.

It is delicious. Bon Appetite. Now I have to hurry. My son, my most delicious chocolate is crying again.

#### **A Poem - Recipe**

##### **(Ganymede)**

As well as butter,

if there is some jam, spread that too.  
and sweetness was dripping,  
and I caught it with my tongue and fingers  
and my father would be sitting at the table  
stern and composed  
with his sleeve in the jam  
explaining to me that as well as raisins  
if chocolate also had hazelnuts,  
it was because the squirrels had taken them  
from all the holes in the trees,  
my grandpa tasting his new wine,  
praising it -  
its good aroma, taste and tannin.  
Next to the kettle  
chocolate was cooking on the stove,  
me adding a pinch of vanilla,  
my mother, some cinnamon,  
it was midday,  
the air clean and warm,  
my sister playing Chopin,  
my brother playing with walnut shells  
and while you entertain yourself separating land from water  
I'll distribute ambrosia to the deities of childhood.