



cooking with heart

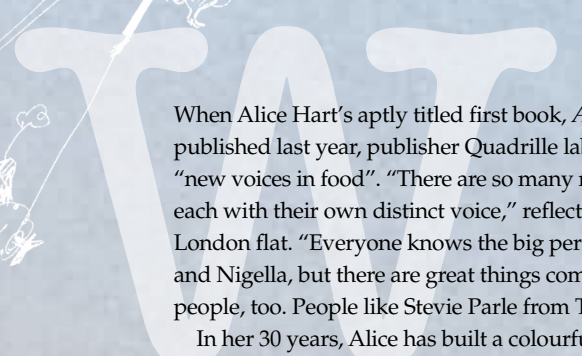

In her new book, *Vegetarian*, UK foodie Alice Hart shows that meat-free cuisine can be satisfying and inspiring.

RECIPES **ALICE HART** WORDS **ALISON PICKEL**
PHOTOGRAPHY **LISA LINDER**


vegetarian.



Alice Hart. Opposite page:
bitter chocolate & salted
caramel tart (recipe p 104).



When Alice Hart's aptly titled first book, *Alice's Cookbook*, was published last year, publisher Quadrille labelled her one of their "new voices in food". "There are so many new foodies out there, each with their own distinct voice," reflects Alice from her cosy London flat. "Everyone knows the big personalities like Jamie and Nigella, but there are great things coming from younger people, too. People like Stevie Parle from The Dock Kitchen."



In her 30 years, Alice has built a colourful culinary career. Since begging her way off the floor and into the kitchen at gastropub The Griffin Inn in Sussex ("I made a terrible waitress – I was always dropping things"), she was hooked. With a something-to-fall-back-on science degree under her belt, she attended Leiths School of Food and Wine. Work in catering and magazines followed, including a stint as deputy food editor at *delicious.* in the UK. Last year, she even squeezed in a 10-day run for a pop-up restaurant just off London's trendy Brick Lane

with her friend and fellow Leiths alumus Georgina Fuggle. These days, however, her attentions are focused on cookbooks, with a few works in the pipeline, plus her new offering from Murdoch Books, *Vegetarian*.

While Alice is not a vegetarian, the idea of cooking without meat is nothing new to her. "My mum was a bit of a hippy when she was younger, so lentils were normal in our household." There are many ethical and health reasons for eating less meat, not to mention the cost benefits, but according to Alice, this doesn't mean vegetarian cuisine has to be "worthy". Instead, her dishes focus on comfort and flavour – perhaps haloumi and carrot fritters or a spicy Malaysian curry.

"Even my male friends love this kind of food. They're never asking, 'where's the steak?'" But ultimately, her food is all about sharing it with the people you care about. "Cooking is simply a lovely thing to do for family and friends."

"Even my male friends love this kind of vegetarian food. They're never asking 'Where's the steak?'"



spiced pumpkin & feta puff pastry tarts

Serves 4

The dense and salty feta is tempered with creamy fromage frais and balanced by the honey-sweet pumpkin. The spicy harissa paste – a hot North African chilli sauce – adds a touch of fire to these crisp tarts.

400g pumpkin, sliced

1 tbs olive oil

100g feta

1 tbs harissa*

1 egg, beaten

2 tbs fromage frais*

A little flour, to dust

375g block puff pastry

4 thyme sprigs,

leaves picked

Preheat the oven to 200°C.

Toss the pumpkin slices with the olive oil, season with salt and pepper and arrange in a single layer in a roasting pan. Cook for about 25

minutes or until tender. Set aside in the pan to cool a little.

Reduce the oven temperature to 190°C.

Cut half the feta into small cubes and crumble the rest. Beat the harissa, egg, fromage frais and crumbled feta together in a bowl and season with pepper and just a little salt (the cheese is already salty).

Lightly flour a work surface and roll out the pastry until it's about 20cm x 30cm. Trim with a sharp knife so the sides are straight, then cut into 12 equal-sized rectangles. Arrange on a lightly greased baking tray.

Spoon a little of the harissa mixture on the centre of each piece of pastry and top with pumpkin and feta cubes. Sprinkle with the thyme and bake for 15-20 minutes until puffed and golden. Serve warm, or allow the tarts to cool on a wire rack.

* Harissa (a North African chilli paste) and fromage frais (substitute creme fraiche) are available from delis and gourmet food shops.

carrot & coriander fritters with haloumi and sweet lemon dressing

Serves 3-4

This is a pretty but complex little number: by turns salty, crisp, hot, sour, yielding and sweet. It will serve four as a swift starter or three as a meal. Make the preparation even quicker and easier by mixing the dressing in advance, so you have it ready in the refrigerator.

250g haloumi

4 large carrots, coarsely grated or shredded

5 spring onions, thinly sliced

A small bunch of coriander, leaves chopped

1 tbs coriander seeds, toasted, crushed

20g chickpea (besan) flour or plain flour

2 eggs, lightly beaten

3 tbs olive oil

Rocket leaves, to serve