



THE SUPPER CLUB

Sister act

Good food and drink runs through the veins of this Cotswold family - from organic veg boxes to bespoke outside catering. But do they know how to throw a good party? You're darn tootin' they do

WORDS BY LAURA ROWE PHOTOS BY KIRSTIE YOUNG

FAMILY AFFAIR

Reckon you're king of the grill? Queen of the dinner party? This is the place to prove it. This section of your *Crumbs* is all about celebrating in style, sharing tips and enjoying good food. So, if you fancy hosting the next *Crumbs* Supper Club, send us venue pics, a suggested menu and 50 words on why you're the ultimate host/hostess to laura.rowe@mediaclash.co.uk

(the supper club)



Purton House in all its glory and, right, the biggest barbecue ever?



Talia specialises in bespoke catering events, so it's little surprise her summer barbecue was such a success

There are some special folk in life, it seems; men and women just born to inspire. They are infectiously enthusiastic, passionate and creative people. Then, very rarely, you come across whole families who fit this bill – like this brood from Purton, near Swindon.

Natalia (or Talia to her friends) Maddison runs Cotswold Cooks from her childhood family home at Purton House Organic Farm. It's an outside catering company with a difference. Produce is, where possible, sourced locally and is organic. Indeed, you couldn't get a much more traceable provenance if you tried, as the

Talia's nephew, blacksmith Tom, made these salt and pepper pots



majority of vegetables are grown by sister Rowie Meers.

Rowie runs Purton House Organics, which has been growing vegetables and rearing beef on the 70 hectares at the farm since the last century. Twenty years ago the family turned the farm organic, and they now offer seasonal fruit and veg, free-range eggs and beef, culminating in their increasingly popular local, organic veg box scheme.

Any other produce is sourced from growers and makers that Talia knows personally – sourdough is bought from Thierry at La Parisienne (you might have spotted him at Gloucester, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, Winchcombe, Stroud and Malmesbury farmers' markets), organic butter is courtesy of some hardworking Guernsey cows in Berkley and cheese is either picked up from Rowie at the farm shop, or at Cirencester market on a Friday. Even the coffee is sourced responsibly – this time from elder sister Alice Rendle, who runs Edgcumbes tea and coffee merchants from Arundel. And if you want petit fours with your coffee? Well, that would come courtesy of younger sister Ibby, who makes bespoke chocolates of every and any description.

And don't even get us started on their children: one's a local blacksmith – take a look at the handcrafted salt and pepper pots for proof. (See what we mean? Inspirational.)

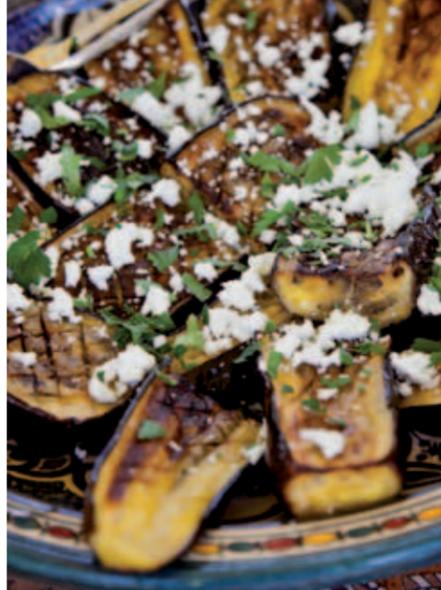
Naturally, it seemed rather fitting to utilise this foodie family for a special *Crumbs* Supper Club at the family home on the farm.



All the family were enlisted to help with the party in the grounds of Talia's childhood home



(the supper club)



Clockwise from top left: chargrilled chicken; blistered aubergine with fresh goat's cheese and coriander; salad leaves picked by Cotswold Cooks' Sophie; cannellini beans with barbecued courgettes and peppers with a basil dressing



"The weather was amazingly good, and we had a lot of produce in the garden," explains Talia. "We'd also just bought a new Indian barbecue that I wanted to try out, and the Raj tent hadn't been up for a long time" – oh, there's us forgetting that Talia's husband, Simon, also runs his own events company. He bought this ornate tent direct from India. "It seemed like the perfect excuse to have my sisters and some friends over for a jolly get together," she smiled.

The menu was a Mediterranean-inspired feast with lots of fresh veggie salads, barbecued chicken and simple canapé starters. Talia even made her own drinks, including an insanely refreshing cool lemon sherbet, which she served in pretty Moroccan glasses, and a fresh mint tea as an alternative to coffee after dinner. Talia says the key to any party is preparation.

"I jointed and brined the chicken six hours before we were ready to barbecue it," explains Talia. Possibly the biggest barbecue we had ever seen, it is also used as a fire pit to keep warm at the end of the night. "The coffee semifreddo affogato was made the night before with some leftover cream I had that needed using up and my sister's roasted coffee, and I had made rillettes, for the canapés, a couple of days before when the Farm Shop had plenty of spare pork belly and shoulder. We made the courgette and cannellini bean salad with basil leaves, and a roasted aubergine salad with goat's cheese and herbs, in the morning."

Delegation also helps...

"I collared my husband Simon to be in charge of the barbecue, my sister Rowie to make the alioli (a Catalan aioli) and my daughter Eva to serve the rillettes on

Talia's sister, Alice Rendle, runs Edgcumbes in Arundel and was on hand to serve coffee and fresh mint tea



Ibby Southerden makes bespoke chocolates from the Cotswolds



(the supper club)



Ice cream made edgy

Affogato literally translates as ‘drowned’, but is best known by savvy, time-saving foodies as the speedy Italian dessert of cold ice cream topped with hot espresso. (And what a way to go...) Variations can include a cheeky splash of liqueur or different flavours of ice cream, but our Talia has not only made her own light and fluffy coffee semifreddo using her sister’s Edgcumbe coffee, but also topped it with a lip-tingling grating of chilli chocolate. Inspired. Talia recommends using specially hardened glasses or a shatterproof coffee cup to serve.

EDGCUMBES AFFOGATO with COFFEE SEMIFREDDO

(SERVES 12)

INGREDIENTS

- 8 eggs
- 200g sugar
- ¼ mug strong, cold coffee
- 700ml double cream
- 12 espresso shots
- 200g chilli chocolate, roughly grated or shaved into flakes

METHOD

– Separate the eggs and whisk the whites to a stiff peak in a clean bowl. In a separate bowl whisk the yolks with the sugar and coffee. In a third bowl, whisk the double cream. Fold all three together and half-fill small coffee cups. Cover with clingfilm and then place in the freezer. Take the cups out of the freezer 30 minutes before you are ready to serve and leave at room temperature.

– Pour hot espresso over the slightly softened semifreddo (at the table, as the semifreddo melts quickly) and sprinkle each glass with the chilli chocolate flakes for a bit of a kick. (Plain chocolate would work just as well.)

toasted sourdough and to help make the pan con tomate.”

Sophie, who works alongside Talia at Cotswold Cooks (and happens to be girlfriend to Tom Southerden the blacksmith, the son of Ibby – you’re still with us, right?) was enlisted to pick the salad.

“My top tip would be to keep it simple but top quality,” says Talia. “Prepare as much in advance as possible, try to have something unusual or memorable in the menu and don’t worry about the washing up.

“The perfect dinner party, after all, is one where you just know you are going to have really good fun, the wine is flowing and it doesn’t feel as late as it is when you leave. Company is the most important ingredient to any good party, as you can still have a memorable evening and eat mundane food – but good food and bad company *never* creates an uplifting memory. So, don’t stress if the food doesn’t go exactly to plan!

“The best dinner party that I have ever been to was one hosted by Pat Cooper from Balscote [famous for making the Kasaundi served in the local pub]. She used to have a dinner party every Wednesday night for all the family and veg box packers after a really hard day’s work. Her food was amazing; sometimes French, sometimes Japanese, sometimes Burmese, sometimes American, sometimes Spanish and sometimes Indian, all places she had lived in and where she’d learnt authentic dishes.”

What a family – and what a feast! ■■■

Useful contacts

- Cotswold Cooks** www.cotswoldcooks.co.uk
- Purton House Organics** www.purtonhouseorganics.co.uk
- Ibby's Chocolates** www.ibbyschocolatekitchen.com
- Edgcumbes Coffee** www.edgcumbes.co.uk
- Floral Studio, Purton** 07834 062068

A classic Italian dessert given a Talia twist with her sister's coffee and chilli chocolate

