

CANAL HOUSE COOKING, VOLUME N° 5, THE GOOD LIFE is a collection of some of our favorite recipes, the ones we cook for ourselves, our friends, and our families during the fall and right through the holiday season. These are recipes that will make you want to restock your pantry and refrigerator and start cooking.

We are home cooks writing about home cooking for other home cooks. Our recipes are easy to prepare and completely doable for the novice and experienced cook alike. In this volume we toast to the good life with ice-cold flutes of grower Champagne and cook lots of big, delicious food. We assemble our version of smørrebrød—that glorious array of Danish open-faced sandwiches—with smoked, cured, and pickled fish. We turn out classic pâtés and terrines; top buckwheat blini with smoked salmon and trout roe; tuck black truffles under the skin of our roasted chicken; make our own sausages to serve with big spoonfuls of creamy polenta; and fill crêpes with savory and sweet fillings. We fry apple fritters in the fall and decorate sugar cookies for the holidays. To see what we are up to, take a peek at some of the pages on the right.

*Canal House Cooking, Volume N° 5, The Good Life*, is the fifth book of our award-winning series of seasonal recipe collections. We publish three volumes a year: Summer, Fall & Holiday, and Winter & Spring, each filled with delicious recipes for you from us.

Cook your way through fall and the holidays with *Canal House Cooking!*

Christopher & Melissa

CANAL HOUSE



COOKING

VOLUME N° 5

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With great appreciation to  
Gabrielle Hamilton for “Christmas Eve”  
Frank Stitt for “Grower Champagnes”



# CANAL HOUSE COOKING

Volume Nº 5

Hamilton & Hirsheimer

**Welcome to Canal House**—our studio, workshop, dining room, office, kitchen, and atelier devoted to good ideas and good work relating to the world of food. We write, photograph, design, and paint, but in our hearts we both think of ourselves as cooks first.

Our loft studio is in an old red brick warehouse. A beautiful lazy canal runs alongside the building. We have a simple galley kitchen. Two small apartment-size stoves sit snugly side by side against a white tiled wall. We have a dishwasher, but prefer to hand wash the dishes so we can look out of the tall window next to the sink and see the ducks swimming in the canal or watch the raindrops splashing into the water.

And every day we cook. Starting in the morning we tell each other what we made for dinner the night before. Midday, we stop our work, set the table simply with paper napkins, and have lunch. We cook seasonally because that's what makes sense. So it came naturally to write down what we cook. The recipes in our books are what we make for ourselves and our families all year long. If you cook your way through a few, you'll see that who we are comes right through in the pages: that we are crazy for tomatoes in summer, make braises and stews all fall, and turn oranges into marmalade in winter.

*Canal House Cooking* is home cooking by home cooks for home cooks. We use ingredients found in most markets. All the recipes are easy to prepare for the novice and experienced cook alike. We want to share them with you as fellow cooks along with our love of food and all its rituals. The everyday practice of simple cooking and the enjoyment of eating are two of the greatest pleasures in life.

**CHRISTOPHER HIRSHEIMER** served as food and design editor for *Metropolitan Home* magazine, and was one of the founders of *Saveur* magazine, where she was executive editor. She is a writer and a photographer.

**MELISSA HAMILTON** cofounded the restaurant Hamilton's Grill Room in Lambertville, New Jersey, where she served as executive chef. She worked at *Martha Stewart Living*, *Cook's Illustrated*, and at *Saveur* as the food editor.



Christopher and Melissa in the Canal House kitchen



## OUR OPEN DOOR POLICY

**ONE MORNING A THICK ICY VELVET COVERS THE LEAVES**—it's the first hard frost. We've had all the clues: golden light falling through the thinning trees patterning the grass, the whiff of wood smoke hanging in cold air, and a certain vibrancy to every view and vista. But a hard frost is the delineator. When we meet at Canal House, we both start talking at the same time "What a day! Fall is really here. Let's take a walk before work." And up the towpath we go, Christopher's little dog, Henry, padding along at our side. We talk as we walk and quickly the conversation turns to food. We think of all the things we'd like to eat now that the cold weather is here. "Let's make sausages...remember that delicious broiled lobster with cream we used to make...gnocchi, definitely gnocchi...and we need to ask Frank Stitt about those grower Champagnes." So we make a list and a plan.

One day we drive into New York to see what's cooking. We're buzzing with excitement and expectation as we drive first through pretty country roads, then onto two-lane highways, and finally we are navigating the four lanes of freeway as we near the city. We chat all the way in about where we are going to go, what we want to buy, then how we plan to cook everything. We are hungry for the elegance of truffles, foie gras, and caviar, and turned on by the idea of making our own fresh sausages, rustic terrines, and roast goose. We're having a good time.

We hit a few stores, and then we head for Russ & Daughters, the venerable appetizing emporium on New York City's Lower East Side, offering the finest smoked fish, pickled and preserved herring, fish roe, and more. Niki Russ Federman and Josh Russ Tupper, fourth-generation Russes, are behind the counter when we walk in and as always, the place is bustling. It's been a year and it's great to see them. They come out from behind the counter to give us a warm hello. We talk about all their wonderful fish and Niki tells us stories while she gives us little tastes. We buy Danish doubled-smoked salmon, chubs with skin that look like burnished gold, salty belly lox, and seven kinds of pickled herring, and we choose jewel-like orange trout roe over osetra caviar—our pockets are only so deep. Everything they sell is so beautifully chosen and prepared.

We load our treasures into coolers in the car. Then we walk across the street to Prune, the restaurant that Melissa's sister Gabrielle owns, and order juicy burgers and flutes of beautiful bubbly Guy Larmandier Rosé, one of those grower Champagnes that we love. On our way out of town we swing by Myers of Keswick for traditional British pork pies and bangers to take home to our families.

It feels so good to cook for ourselves, our families, and our friends at Canal House. We choose small splurges with big returns. We are ready, our larder and fridge are full, and there are a couple bottles of Champagne chilling out on our little balcony. We have everything we need for this season's recipe repertoire. When the kitchen is up and running it's amazing what you can make. Good food begets more good food. And then there is the beautiful bonus of leftovers—a breakfast of jellied juices from last night's roast chicken spread on toast, or a thick slice of pâté on a warm buttered English muffin, or a lunch of minced chicken and mushrooms wrapped up in a delicate crêpe.

Sometimes life arrives at our door unexpectedly. One evening while we were working late, there was a shy knock at the door. Elizabeth and Tom, in their Saturday night finery, stepped into the studio beaming. Walking by after dinner, they'd seen our lights glowing into the dark and climbed the stairs to share some good news. He'd just proposed. She'd accepted. The room turned into a dream—they stood there floating in love. We were transported too, the first to know. Thrilled to share the happy moment, we pulled out a chilled bottle of Champagne, popped the cork, and toasted to their happiness and to a good life to come.

Soon after, Gabrielle arrived from the city with Melissa's two young nephews, Marco and Leone, for a few days in the country. Her visit coincided, unfortunately, with our deadline, a DO NOT DISTURB sign hung on the door. But the boys wanted/needed to say hi to their aunt for just a minute. They met Henry the dog. That minute turned into ten as boys and dog raced around the studio chasing each other. Then off they went on a walk, and returned with Henry wet and covered in mud. Everything stopped. Time for a bath in the sink. The boys helped scrub him up with lots of soapy bubbles. They pulled out the burrs from his long feathery coat. We baked a tray of sugar cookies and gave in to the moment. The ten-minute hello turned into a two-hour adventure for the boys, the dog, and for us. We made our deadline anyway.

The good life surrounds us. We find it in our everyday rituals. But often it comes through the unexpected, too, and we gratefully embrace it.

Christopher & Melissa



## AN APPETIZING SMØRREBRØD

One of the rituals we look forward to as the cold weather holidays approach is stocking up on and indulging in all varieties of delicious smoked and cured fish and a few kinds of fish roe—they pair perfectly with a glass of cold Champagne. At the “appetizing” shops in New York City (“appetizing” being the term for stores that sell fish and dairy that traditionally start off a meal), everything comes beautifully prepared and ready to eat: silky, buttery smoked salmons, pickled herring filets, affordable jewel-like orange trout and salmon eggs, and expensive grey-black caviars, too. We rely on one of the oldest appetizing shops in the country, Russ & Daughters, established in 1914—a New York City institution on the Lower East Side.

And every year we assemble our version of the famed *smørrebrød* (Danish for “buttered bread”)—that glorious array of open-faced sandwiches. We make them with all the fish from our “appetizing” spree. We prepare a few simple spreads and condiments that work with most everything so it’s easy to mix and match. Here are the things we like to have on hand for building these beautiful sandwiches.

### 🐟 BREAD 🐟

We use thin slices of good, dense, black rye or pumpernickel.

### 🐟 SPREADS 🐟

To keep the bread moist and keep the toppings from making it soggy, we use a few different spreads.

**Butter**—Our standard. We use a delicious salted butter, like the Irish butter from Kerrygold, kept at room temperature so it’s easy to spread.

**Creamed cheese**—We like to use goat cream cheese when we can find it.

### HORSERADISH BUTTER

Mix together 4 tablespoons softened butter with 1–2 tablespoons drained prepared horseradish in a small bowl until smooth. This butter will keep, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. — *makes about ¼ cup*



We like a selection of pickled, smoked, cured, and tinned fish, and use some or all of the following, depending on how ambitious we are feeling.

**Belly lox**—This is the mid-section of a juicy salmon, cured in a special salt brine. We love its tingly saltiness.

**Chub**—These smoky North American lake fish are tender and moist.

**Smoked sablefish**—An appetizing classic, this buttery smoked fish, also known as black cod or simply sable, is line-caught in the waters of the North Pacific.

**Pickled, smoked, salted, and matjes herring**—We love them all, from the classic briny pickled herring, to the smoky French herring, to the salted schmaltz, and the clovy matjes.

**Smoked or cured salmon**—With so many available, we’ve found that the best way to choose is simply to taste your way through, though we avoid those with an artificial-looking pink or orange hue, and ultimately settle on smoked salmon with a good pedigree, and with silky buttery texture well balanced in the salt and smoke world.

**Smoked sturgeon**—This freshwater white-fleshed fish, whose roe is turned into the priciest kind of caviar, has a distinctly earthy, sweet flavor.

**Fish roe**—Big orange salmon eggs or beautiful smaller (also orange) trout eggs add a pop-in-your-mouth texture and saltiness; plus they have a jewel-like beauty. Look for malossol quality. We crown sandwiches with a spoonful.

**Canned sardines**—We like them packed in olive oil. The plump Spanish sardines from Matiz Gallego (three to a can) are excellent.

**Canned smoked eel**—These delicate little filets have a subtle smoky flavor. We prefer the ones packed in olive oil to those in cottonseed oil.

**Canned codfish liver**—Not at all like the infamous daily dose, these are rich yet delicate in flavor, and incredibly tender.



## PIMENTÓN FRIED EGGS

We love the rich, savory flavor of eggs fried in bubbling hot olive oil and the way the oil makes the whites puffy around the yolks and crisp around the edges. Pimentón, the exquisite Spanish paprika, adds a delicious smoky flavor and stains the oil a gorgeous deep brick orange, so beautiful to baste over the eggs. Serve these for breakfast, with a good crusty bread to sop up the flavorful oil, or with stewy chickpeas any time of the day.

Heat **4 tablespoons olive oil** in a heavy medium skillet over medium-high heat until quite warm. Add **½ teaspoon pimentón** and tip the skillet to swirl it around so it dissolves into the oil. Crack **4 eggs** into the skillet and reduce the heat if it gets a little too hot. Fry the eggs, basting them with the olive oil, until the whites are firm and the yolks remain soft. Season with **salt**. Serve the eggs with the oil spooned on top.—*makes 4*

## EGGS WITH CAPER & PARSLEY BUTTER SAUCE

makes about ¼ cup

This piquant sauce is lovely spooned over poached or fried eggs, but is equally delicious served with a filet of flounder, sole, or other delicate white fish.

**4 tablespoons butter**

**2 tablespoons red or white  
wine vinegar**

**1 tablespoon capers**

**2–3 tablespoons chopped fresh  
parsley leaves**

**4 poached or fried eggs**

Melt the butter in a small pan over medium heat. When it is foaming, add the vinegar and capers and cook, swirling the pan over the heat from time to time, until the vinegar evaporates, the butter browns slightly, and the sauce thickens a little bit, 1–2 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and add the parsley. Spoon the sauce over the eggs.





## TRUFFLED LOBSTER WITH GNOCCHI

serves 4

There are only three things you have to like to enjoy this sumptuous dish—sweet meaty lobster, velvety rich cream, and earthy black truffle. The tender little pillows of potato gnocchi are an added bonus.

Two 1¼-pound lobsters

Salt

6 tablespoons butter

1 small clove garlic, crushed

1 small dried red chile or 2 pinches  
dried red pepper flakes

¼ cup white wine

Freshly grated nutmeg

3 cups heavy cream

Pepper

1 fresh black winter truffle,  
thinly sliced

½ recipe freshly cooked Gnocchi  
(page 54)

Plunge the tip of a large sharp knife into the heads of the lobsters just behind the eyes. Drop the lobsters head first into a large pot of salted boiling water over high heat and cook for 10 minutes. Use tongs to transfer them from the pot to a colander to let rest until they are cool enough to handle.

Working over a bowl to catch any juices, crack the lobster shells and remove the meat from the tail, knuckles, and claws, reserving the shells and any juices. Cut the lobster meat into large bite-size pieces, leaving the claw meat whole.

Melt the butter in a large, wide, heavy pot over medium-low heat. Add the garlic, dried chile, lobster shells, wine, and a generous grating of nutmeg. Cover and sweat the shells, stirring occasionally, for 15–20 minutes. Add the cream and any accumulated lobster juices from the bowl and season with salt and pepper. Gently simmer until the cream is impregnated with the flavors from the lobster, 5–10 minutes.

Strain the lobster cream through a fine sieve into a heavy medium pot, discarding the solids. Add the truffle slices and the lobster meat to the cream and gently simmer over medium-low heat until the lobster is warmed through, 5–10 minutes. Adjust the seasonings.

Divide the warm gnocchi and the pieces of lobster between four warm deep plates or wide soup bowls. Spoon the truffles and cream over each serving and garnish with a little fresh tarragon, if you like.



## NILOUFER'S CAULIFLOWER & CHICKPEAS

serves 4–6

We know we have mentioned Niloufer Ichaporia King's book, *My Bombay Kitchen* (University of California Press, 2007) before, but actually we can't mention it enough. While our cooking tends toward the fresh herb-based, she really understands spices. We called her late one night when we were noodling around with some cauliflower recipes and off the top of her lovely head this is what she told us to do. Niloufer is a giver and generously shares her deep culinary knowledge. Lucky for all of us.

2 tablespoons ghee, clarified butter, or canola oil	1 teaspoon garam masala
½ teaspoon fennel seeds	Salt
1 small yellow onion, minced	2 cups cooked chickpeas
2 tablespoons grated, peeled fresh ginger	1 head cauliflower, broken in florets
2–3 cloves garlic, minced into a paste	Large handful cilantro, leaves and stems chopped
½ teaspoon turmeric	Juice of 1 lime
¼ teaspoon cayenne, or more	

Heat the ghee in a large skillet over medium heat and toast the fennel seeds for about 1 minute. Add the onion, ginger, and garlic and cook, stirring and scraping the bottom of the skillet with a wooden spoon to keep it from sticking, until brown, about 10 minutes.

Add the turmeric, cayenne, garam masala, and a big pinch of salt to the skillet and cook, dribbling in a little water as you stir. Add the chickpeas, cauliflower, and ½ cup water. Cover and cook until the cauliflower is tender, 15–20 minutes. Add the chopped cilantro and lime juice and serve with yogurt and rice or big floppy flatbread like chapatis, if you like.

## THE APPLE FARM'S ROASTED CAULIFLOWER

At the Philo Apple Farm's cooking school, Karen Bates says they sometimes use olive oil, fresh lemon juice, or thinly sliced Meyer lemons if they are short on preserved lemons.

Preheat the oven to 400°. Divide **one whole cauliflower** into florets and toss with **4 tablespoons melted butter** and **3 tablespoons finely chopped preserved lemon**. Roast until tender, about 20 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. — *serves 4–6*

## WARM SAVOY CABBAGE SALAD

serves 8

This warm salad is a classic of the Alsace region. Even if it seems slightly weird to mix Japanese with Alsatian, we prefer rice wine vinegar's slightly sweet mellow flavor to traditional white wine vinegar's sharp bite. This dish is a delicious counterpoint to rich meats like goose or ham.

8 pieces thick-sliced bacon, sliced into thin pieces	1 savoy cabbage, cored, leaves julienned
1 cup rice wine vinegar	Salt and pepper
1 apple, peeled, cored, and chopped	

Fry the bacon in a large heavy pot, stirring from time to time over medium heat until it is crisp and brown, about 20 minutes. Keep the heat low so the fat doesn't burn and take on an unpleasant taste. Lift the bacon from the pot with a slotted spatula and drain on paper towels.

Pour the vinegar into the pot with the bacon fat and cook for a minute over medium heat. Add the apples and cabbage, and season with salt and pepper. Cook until wilted and tender, about 30 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning (don't hold back on the pepper, this dish benefits from its spicy bite). Transfer to a serving bowl and sprinkle with the bacon. Serve warm or at room temperature.

## CHICKEN & MUSHROOMS

serves 8

Alice Waters once told us that her dear friend Martine could feed nine people with one chicken. With the meaty 6- to 8-pound chickens we buy from our local farmer, we can do the same thing.

One 6–8-pound chicken, or two 3-pound chickens	2 cloves garlic, minced
Salt and pepper	2 cups Riesling
Wondra or all-purpose flour	24 ounces button mushrooms or wild mushroom, sliced
8 tablespoons (1 stick) butter	Juice of 1 lemon
1 large onion, thickly sliced	2 cups heavy cream or crème fraîche

Cut the chicken into 16 pieces; 6 pieces of breast, 4 pieces of thigh, 2 legs, 4 pieces of wings. (If you are using 2 chickens, cut each into 8 pieces.) Lay chicken pieces on a cutting board, season with salt and pepper and a light dusting of flour. Turn the pieces over, season and dust with flour.

Melt 2 tablespoons of the butter in each of two large skillets over medium-high heat. Divide the chicken between the skillets by dark and light meat. Brown the chicken on all sides for about 15 minutes. Add half the onions and garlic to each skillet and cook for a few minutes. Reduce the heat to low, then add 1 cup Riesling to each skillet. Cover each skillet loosely with a piece of foil and cook until the juices run clear when the chicken is pieced with a sharp knife, about 45 minutes. (The white meat may only take 30 minutes to cook so keep an eye on it.) Transfer the cooked chicken and onions to a large platter and keep warm in a very low oven. Use a rubber spatula and transfer all the pan juices from both skillets to a small bowl.

Melt the remaining 4 tablespoons of butter in one of the skillets over medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms, toss in the butter and cook until lightly browned, about 15 minutes. Add the lemon juice and season with salt and pepper. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the mushrooms on top of the chicken. Stir the pan juices into the skillet over medium heat. Add the cream and stir until hot and bubbly. Pour through a strainer over the chicken. Serve garnished with herbs, if you like.





## PEAR UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE

makes one 9-inch cake

This simple cake, full of warm ginger flavor, relies on voluptuous pears that are ripe and juicy. Two common varieties, Bartlett and Anjou, are good choices.

6 tablespoons unsalted butter

⅓ cup dark brown sugar

1 pinch plus ¼ teaspoon salt

3 ripe pears

1 cup all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons ground ginger

1 teaspoon baking powder

½ cup whole milk

2 eggs

1 cup granulated sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste or  
vanilla extract

Preheat the oven to 375°. Melt 4 tablespoons of the butter in a small saucepan over low heat. Add the dark brown sugar and a pinch of salt and stir until well combined. Pour the brown sugar mixture into a 9-inch round cake pan, spreading it out to cover the bottom of the pan; set aside.

Peel and halve the pears. Use a small spoon (a teaspoon from a measuring set works well) to scoop out the core, then use a paring knife to notch out the stem. Arrange the pears cut side up around the bottom of the prepared pan.

Wisk together the flour, ginger, baking powder, and ¼ teaspoon salt in a small bowl; set aside. Bring the milk almost to a boil in a small pan over medium heat. Add the remaining 2 tablespoons butter. Keep hot over low heat.

Beat the eggs in a mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium-high speed until thick and pale, about 3 minutes. Gradually add the granulated sugar, beating constantly for about 5 minutes. Add the flour mixture and stir well. Add the vanilla and the hot milk, stirring until the batter is smooth. Pour the batter over the pears.

Bake the cake until golden, and a wooden skewer comes out clean when inserted in the center, about 40 minutes. Let the cake cool for about 10 minutes, then invert it onto a serving plate, fruit side up. Serve the cake slightly warm or at room temperature.

For more information, email us at