

Weekend

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FREE



ON THE RECORD

Damian Lewis has the acting world at his feet – so why has he stepped out of the comfort zone to release a debut album and take it on tour? p10

CHOCOLATE BROWNIES

Martha Collison on the recipe that was years in the making

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A TASTE OF PROVENCE

Three fabulous French-inspired courses on Diana Henry's menu

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All hail the new Caesar

Whoever said 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' clearly had no sense of adventure. Take the summer favourite, Caesar salad. You can play it straight with Romaine lettuce, parmesan and croutons in an anchovy dressing – as Caesar Cardini did when he invented it a century ago. Or you can add a new twist to it. Chefs are grilling the lettuce, making vegan dressing with aquafaba and using alternative greens – such as the kale in Ottolenghi's version, which also includes zaatar chickpeas and roasted grapes. You'll also find kale in the ultimate Caesar recipe, with smoked steaky bacon, chicken thighs and crispy skin, at [waitrose.com](https://www.waitrose.com).



'Roasting plums intensifies their flavour, and adding a little spice works beautifully too – try the recipe for roasted plums with vanilla ice cream at [waitrose.com](https://www.waitrose.com)'

WILL TORRENT

Partner & senior brand development chef

All it took was a few days of southern sunshine, and I've come home thinking differently. Although my visit to Naples and Puglia wasn't a holiday – I was visiting farms and food producers – it was a reminder of how refreshing travel is, and how it opens you up to new flavours and ways of doing things.

For as long as I remember, I've been campaigning in favour of homegrown fruit and veg, and I like nothing more than seeing a Union Flag when choosing produce. Summer plenty has started rolling in, with beans, sweetcorn and other seasonal treats. I'm an ardent fan of British tomatoes, which are grown with such skill, and give those from warmer climes a run for their money.

Such is my enthusiasm that my recent visit was a shock to the system. It started at breakfast in Paestum – a city in Campania boasting no less than three ancient Greek temples – with a dish of the most delicious melon I've ever tasted, an unidentified variety of cantaloupe, sultry orange in colour, sweet, juicy and intoxicatingly fragrant. I was offered a glass of juice made from the same fruit but it seemed criminal, so I helped myself to more melon instead. That evening, at a food festival, I munched watermelon wedges so luscious I didn't notice the rivers of juice running down my face.

The moral? I was reminded with a bump that, however hard we try in this country, there are things that grow and ripen under the Mediterranean sun which we can never hope to emulate. This



ORLANDO MURRIN

Celebrating seasonal produce at home and abroad

is not to decry the expertise of British farmers, and the talents of allotmenters and grow-your-owners. But in southern Europe, growers have a dependable climate, months of blue sky and sunshine, and decades, if not centuries, of experience of what crops prosper on their land. And unsurprisingly, their melons, cherries and grapes simply taste better for it.

Which brings me to tomatoes. I will write another time about the fabled San Marzano – at the shrine of which all other canned tomatoes kneel – but I was fascinated to visit a zero-waste hydroponic farm in Puglia called Lapietra. Here, brothers Pasquale and Vincenzo train tomatoes and cucumbers in cordons, as you might grapevines, to an astonishing length of three to five metres. Tomatoes of every imaginable shape – cherry, plum, grape – in hues of red, yellow, black and green hang in lush clusters, to the gentle buzz of bees brought in specially to pollinate the flowers.

I'll continue to savour the UK's brilliant homegrown produce, which gets better and better. On high days and holidays, however, I will no longer deny myself the pleasure of fruit and vegetables from faraway places to celebrate 'the best of the best'. I wish you summer sunshine, wherever you find yourself.

Orlando's first novel, Knife Skills For Beginners, is out early next year. He is President of the Guild of Food Writers. [orlandomurrin.com](https://www.orlandomurrin.com)