

Booktopia

Booktopia exclusive recipe and Q&A with Rachel Grisewood, author of *Manna from Heaven*

1. Is there a secret to really good cookies?

That's such a big question but also simple! First of all use a good recipe and make sure you buy good quality ingredients. I prefer biscuits that are not too sweet so you can taste the flavour of the ingredients. Vanilla brings out the flavour of the ingredients and in savoury biscuits salt has the same affect.

2. When you are at the grocery store how do you choose fresh produce to piece together your home menu?

I shop almost daily either at a food market or at Norton St Grocer in Leichhardt. As I walk around I look at the ingredients: I am inspired by them. If I am with Olive (my daughter) I may ask her what she feels like, if the spinach looks all bouncy and fresh we may have some sautéed spinach & garlic, maybe with some roasted desires potatoes. The tomatoes may look particularly red and at Norton Street they sell buffalo mozzarella, which goes well together with a big bunch of basil. Also, I am governed by my mood and what I feel like eating, although my preference is usually Mediterranean, there are times when I feel like Indian and I buy a packet of basmati rice and pick up some fresh ginger and a bunch of coriander. If I am having people over for lunch I almost certainly will make bread of some sort, so it's a packet of yeast and some triple 'O' flour to make a light flat bread for people to munch on when they arrive. That also means olives and if I am lucky and I am at the market I will pick up some Darling Mills olives. If I am at Pymont market I pick up strawberries for strawberry sorbet (the recipe is in my book), Olive loves that.

3. How do you maintain a child's health whilst producing delicious sweets?

Olive, my daughter, is a fit and healthy girl who has always been around sweets; chocolates, ice-creams, cakes and all sorts of edible deliciousness. She eats what I give her and she has a good balance of every food group, and yes sometimes she has chocolate for breakfast which I think is a whole food group in itself. I believe in a mixture of everything and I don't look at food as bad or good but there is badly cooked food and inferior ingredients both of which I abhor.

4. If you had half an hour in your kitchen to whip up something satisfying for the body and soul what would you cook?

I find pasta so grounding and comforting mixed with some clams, garlic, lemon and parsley, I would be happy in less than half an hour. Here's the recipe...(attached) with a glass of Pinot Grigio, it's heaven at home.

5. What are your most essential ingredients?

Olive oil, olive oil, olive oil, tomatoes, parmesan, basil, garlic, Ortiz anchovies, and flour & yeast so I could make bread. I would love some perfect Italian prosciutto or Italian salami along with my friends, daughter, family and all my pets.

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Pippies, Clams or Vongole Pasta with Garlic and Parsley

For two (if you want more, just double the recipe).

150g of spaghetti
2 big cloves of garlic
olive oil
30g butter
1kg of clams, vongole or pippies
1 cup of water
a big handful of parsley, roughly chopped
juice of a lemon
salt and pepper
Parmesan for grating

Boil a big pan of water, add the spaghetti and cook until just *al dente*. Drain and leave to one side. In the same saucepan fry the roughly chopped garlic in some oil and butter until it just turns brown; add the clams and a cup of water. Boil on high heat until the clams start to open up (this only takes a couple of minutes). Add the parsley, lemon juice and lots of salt and pepper. Add the pasta and give it a big stir. Serve in the dish with a sprinkling of Parmesan and a big bowl to throw the shells into.