

FOOD & WINE

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ISSUE

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AT HOME

A Breath of Fresh Air Her city home couldn't keep chef Carine Ottou from cooking outdoors.

By Morgan Goldberg

PHOTOGRAPHY: CATHY PYLE / COURTESY OF YOKO KLOEDEN DESIGN

GROWING UP IN CAMEROON, chef Carine Ottou and her family did most of their cooking outside. Though she's adapted to a European lifestyle over years of moving around the continent, she still prefers to make her food while immersed in greenery—even in her London home.

When Ottou's culinary businesses (including a global cuisine supper club, pickling workshops, and a line of sauces called Marie's Little Jar) outgrew the cramped kitchen in her Victorian terrace house, she knew its renovation would have to include an open-air cook space seamlessly connected to the interior. "I wanted people to be able to see me cook. I wanted to be able to talk to them about what I'm doing and really make that essential to the experience," she says.

Ottou's vision featured an earthy color palette and natural materials to match her organic culinary ethos, which made for a successful collaboration with Japanese designer and historic architecture specialist Yoko Kloeden. The duo connected over a shared love of nature and created an indoor-outdoor chef's oasis that maximizes the compact footprint and functions flawlessly for Ottou's businesses.

The magic starts on the Siberian larch deck, where a vertical garden grows wild greenery for a lush backdrop. Just below the wall, custom mudcloth cushions adorn a bench that spans the width of the yard. The Malian fabric seats not only offer the ideal spot for guests to sip on cocktails and watch Ottou in action, but they also provide a subtle nod to her West African heritage.

A modular, charcoal-hued concrete counter sourced from the Netherlands cleverly holds a built-in Big Green Egg, which lets Ottou smoke up to three whole chickens at once. The stainless steel sink beside it is an invaluable convenience that enables her to be entirely present while hosting on the patio.

When Ottou moves inside, her antique-inspired, patinated zinc-topped island follows. It's equipped with wheels for smooth transitions to the center of the newly expanded kitchen, which is lined with handleless oak veneer cupboards on both sides. Between cookware and jars of fermented vegetables, Ottou needed as much storage as she could get.

With strategic placement, Kloeden managed to squeeze in all of Ottou's desired appliances as well. She requested a spacious refrigerator, high-tech oven, plate warmer, and wine cooler to help her achieve restaurant-quality service. "I wanted a large stove, too, where I could grill whether it was winter or summer," she adds.

But when the season permits, Ottou can be found in her outdoor kitchen. She feels most at ease among her plants, cooking the way she did as a child—and she's thankful her updated home allows her to do so. "There are far more beautiful houses, and bigger ones," she admits. "But this house, for some reason, has everything."

SHOP THE SETUP: Ottou's outdoor dining and cooking upgrades include a classic Medium **Big Green Egg** (\$699, biggreenegg.com); modular, modern outdoor **concrete countertops** from WWOO Design (prices vary, wwoos.com); and sturdy **mudcloth pillows** in a variety of patterns, colors, and sizes (from \$50, hauslife.co.uk).



Equal parts aesthetically pleasing and functional, Ottou's recent kitchen expansion leaves ample room for entertaining and cooking, both indoors and out.



FOOD STYLING: MARGARET MONROE DICKEY; PROP STYLING: AUDREY DAVIS

Candied Beet Salad with Horseradish-Cashew Cream

ACTIVE 20 MIN; TOTAL 2 HR
SERVES 4

Using a variety of beets, such as red, golden, or Chioggia (sometimes called candystripe), adds stunning color to this vibrant salad. The beets are cut into wedges and then roasted, which intensifies their earthy sweetness. Nutty and crunchy, the flax, chia, and poppy seed crisps stand in for croutons; soaked and pureed cashews serve as the creamy base of the vegan horseradish sauce.

BEETS

- 2 lb. trimmed multicolored baby beets (from about 3 lb. beets with greens, or 12 to 14 beets), unpeeled, scrubbed, and cut into 1-inch wedges
- 5 unpeeled garlic cloves
- 3 (3-inch) rosemary sprigs
- 1½ tsp. olive oil
- 1¼ tsp. fine sea salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper

CRISPS

- 2 Tbsp. golden flax seeds or brown flax seeds
- 2 Tbsp. water

- 2 Tbsp. chia seeds
- 1½ Tbsp. poppy seeds
- ⅛ tsp. fine sea salt

CASHEW-HORSERADISH CREAM

- ¾ cup raw cashews, soaked in water at least 1 hour or up to 12 hours
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice, plus more for serving
- ¼ cup water
- 2 Tbsp. freshly grated horseradish
- 2 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. nutritional yeast flakes (optional)
- ¼ tsp. fine sea salt

ADDITIONAL INGREDIENT

Baby salad greens, pea shoots, or torn beet leaves

1. Make the beets: Preheat oven to 350°F. Arrange beets, separated by color, in an even layer in a 13- x 9-inch baking pan. Add garlic cloves and rosemary sprigs to pan; drizzle with oil, and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast in preheated oven until beets are tender and slightly wrinkled, about 1 hour. Let stand at room temperature until cool, about 45 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, make the crisps: Increase oven temperature to 375°F. Pulse flax seeds in a spice grinder until coarsely ground, 4 to 6 pulses. Stir together ground flax seeds, 2 tablespoons water, chia seeds, poppy seeds, and salt in a large bowl; let stand at room temperature, uncovered, 10 minutes. Spoon mixture onto a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, and top with an additional parchment paper sheet. Roll mixture to ⅛-inch thickness. Remove top parchment sheet. Bake mixture at 375°F until hardened, about 15 minutes. Let cool 15 minutes. Break into about 2-inch pieces.

3. Make the cashew-horseradish cream: Drain soaked cashews. Place cashews, lemon juice, ¼ cup water, horseradish, vinegar, nutritional yeast (if using), and salt in a blender; process until smooth, about 30 seconds.

4. Remove and discard rosemary sprigs from pan with beets. Peel garlic cloves; discard skins. Arrange salad greens on a large platter, and top with beets and garlic. Sprinkle with crisps, and dollop with cashew cream. If desired, sprinkle with additional lemon juice. —CARINE OTTOU

MAKE AHEAD Store leftover cashew-horseradish cream in an airtight container in refrigerator up to 1 week, or freeze up to 6 months.

NOTE Baby beets have a thin skin that gets tender after roasting. If using larger beets, peel before roasting.