

episode 15 show notes and advice

Growing your own delicious vegetables can be extremely fulfilling; knowing you can harvest exactly what you need for your lunch or dinner, and when the fruit of your gardening labour is truly at its best.

To add another dimension, and even more flavour to your food, in this week's episode, we discuss cooking over fire.

Bringing Middle Eastern inspiration and nearly a decade of experience at the helm of Honey & Co, Sarit Packer and Itamar Srulovich share their flair for flame-cooked cuisine, and how you can grow and cook your own dishes for intense and delicious flavours.

In this episode, discover:

- Recipes inspired by Sarit & Itamar's Middle Eastern travels
- How Honey & Co. wrote their book *Chasing Smoke*, for chefs with any kind of grill
- The special qualities unique to cooking with fire
- Picking the perfect potted tomatoes and aubergines to grow
- Sarit & Itamar's dream seasonal recipes for the next month

Honey & Co. : <https://honeyandco.co.uk/>

Photography © Patricia Niven

Order Sarit and Itamar's new, book out now, *Chasing Smoke – Cooking over fire around the Levant* (*Published by Pavilion books, RRP £26.00*): <https://honeyandco.co.uk/books/>

Order Sarah's new book: <http://bit.ly/3cR0kyh>

Order Arthur's new book: <http://bit.ly/3qiBqUs>

Shop on the Sarah Raven Website: <http://bit.ly/3jvbaeu>

Get in touch: info@sarahraven.com

Follow Sarah: <https://bit.ly/3jDTvBp>

Follow Arthur: <https://bit.ly/3jxSKK5>

episode 15 advice sheet | cooking on fire with Sarit Packer & Itamar Srulovich (Honey & Co)

Since lockdown, Honey & Co offer a takeaway supper club every Friday and Saturday night, themed around one of the places they have visited.

They will be at Perch Hill on 3rd September demonstrating recipes from Chasing Smoke, Sarit & Itamar's latest book

The new book is a travel journal, cookery and recipe book, in essence, a way of eating and the sensibility of food. As with their previous books, Sarit tends to do the recipes, with Itamar, the storytelling. "From the countryside of Jordan to the back streets of Cairo, we've been following a smoke trail, answering the ancient call of the hot coals, chasing down the delicious, proud traditions of cooking over fire around the Middle East – eating sweet roasted chestnuts at roadside stalls in Adana, grilling sardines on Greek beaches,

exploring the alleyway markets of Amman and Acre – burning our fingers turning meat and bread, always looking for the friendliest people, the fiercest fires and the tastiest recipes to bring back to our kitchen, our restaurants, and to this book."

They don't include Jerusalem or Istanbul, but chose the places that are less travelled, and cities that are less well known.

All you need is some charcoal and a little grill, which can even be a barrel with a few holes in the bottom or a small pit in the ground. They both love a good honest meal, which, according to Packer and Srulovich, "If you can eat it in your hands, so much the better".

What they love about cooking on fire is that, by the very nature of the element, the pace of everything has to slow, allowing time to pause and savour the whole process. It's not a means to an end, nor just about going into the kitchen and turning on the gas.

Flame cooking intensifies the taste so much, particularly with fruit and vegetables. The caramelisation brings out the flavour of vegetables, especially the nightshades; aubergines and



juicy peppers are totally transformed by fire and a hint of smoke as the heat dehydrates the water content and intensifies the sugars. If the flavour of the raw ingredient is not the greatest, you'll need a touch more salt and then use the chef's technique of mixing sugar and vinegar, to enhance the taste.

Tomatoes too, even winter varieties 'Morindas' from Sicily, and later, 'San Marzano', and maybe Sarah's favourite container tomato 'Texan Wild Cherry'. Sarah's recommended grow-your-own aubergines for the UK climate are 'Moneymaker' and an Asian, quick-cook variety called 'Slim Jim'.

Fire also works brilliantly with fruit such as loquats, apricots, figs and, amazingly, watermelon, which is 90% water, and yet the grill and the fire intensifies the flavour to make something very special.

RECIPES mentioned in the podcast

Galayet bandora – tomato stew with green chilli

Sarit's favourite experience from their series of trips for the book was a day in Jordan. They bought tomatoes, onions and chilli in a market in Amman and then drove up to a shepherd's hut in a high flowery meadow in North Jordan and made Galayet Bandora, a tomato stew on the fire.

Serve with plenty of flatbread to soak up the party. This can feed a crowd as part of a spread, or 4, as a meal in its own right

4 tbsp olive oil

2 large Spanish onions, peeled and roughly chopped

6 garlic cloves, peeled and thickly sliced

2 green chillies, thinly sliced (keep the seeds in for a spicier result)

1.5 kg / 3 lb 5 oz tomatoes, the ripest you can find

2 tsp salt

1 tbsp sugar

freshly ground black pepper

Set a large wok directly onto a roaring fire. Add the olive oil, heat for a minute, then tip in the onions and garlic. Stir around to coat well and fry until the onions start to soften, but don't let

them colour too much. Add the slices of chilli and the tomatoes, toss to coat in the oil and mix through, then sprinkle with the salt and sugar and stir well. Allow to cook for about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes have almost completely broken down. You can cover the wok with a lid to help the process along. Just before serving, add a few good twists of the black pepper grinder, stir again and dish up while still piping hot.

To cook without a BBQ

You can cook this on a stove over a very high heat, in a wok or similar large pan, but it won't be the same, so ideally go outside and start a fire to cook it over.

Whole burnt aubergine with charred egg yolk, tahini and chilli sauce

Itamar's favourite time was when they were in Southern Turkey, Adana and Gaziantep and looking at the influences of Syrian cookery, close to the border with Aleppo, which to him, feels like the birthplace of food.

This recipe is the essence of their food, distilled into a single dish. "It is inspired by the first whole burnt aubergine we ever ate, served with a smattering of grated tomato, at a very famous Jerusalem establishment we both love. It has since become a staple at every BBQ, and in our restaurant Honey & Smoke. Burning the aubergine really brings out the best in this slightly bland vegetable. Don't hold back – by the time you're done, the skin should be blackened and the flesh so soft it can easily be scooped out with a spoon."

Itamar loves eggs, the yolks here serve to enrich the dish, and charred, they add extra flavour.

Serves 2 as a meal

2 aubergines

50 g / 1 ¾ oz tahini paste

50 ml / 1 ¾ fl oz ice cold water

2 egg yolks from fresh / organic eggs

For the lemon, chilli and garlic dressing

1 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped (about 10 g / 1/3 oz)

1 green chilli, deseeded and finely chopped (about 10 g / 1/3 oz)
3 large garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped (about 20 g / 3/4 oz)
juice of 1–2 lemons (about 80 ml / 2 3/4 fl oz)
1 tsp table salt
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp caster sugar
2 tbsp olive oil
1 bunch of parsley, leaves picked and chopped (about 30 g / 1 oz)

Place the aubergines (whole) on a very hot grill, or directly on the embers if you prefer. Let them scorch all over, turning them occasionally, until the skin is charred and the flesh is so soft that it seems as though they are going to collapse.

While the aubergines are cooking, combine all the ingredients for the dressing, apart from the chopped parsley. Separately mix the tahini paste with the water to form a thick whipped cream consistency.

Once the aubergines are fully blackened, remove from the grill, place onto serving plates and slit open to reveal the flesh. Add the parsley to the dressing and mix well. Use half the dressing to douse the flesh of the slit aubergines, then top with the whipped tahini. Use the back of a spoon to create a little well in the tahini and place a raw egg yolk in the centre of each one. Using tongs, carefully remove a hot charcoal from the fire and lightly char the top of each yolk. Return the coal to the fire and drizzle the remaining dressing over the aubergines before serving.

To cook without a BBQ

Cook the aubergines on your highest grill setting or in a very hot oven at 240°C/220°C fan/gas mark 9, remembering to pierce them with a fork beforehand, as they have a tendency to explode. Scorch one side, then rotate and char the other side until the flesh of the aubergine is completely soft. Use a blow torch to scorch the surface of the egg yolk, or simply heat the back of a spoon over a flame and use that instead.

Spiced courgettes with goats' yogurt and grapes

Itamar's dream dish on the fire at this time of year, are tiny courgettes, served with fresh olive oil, salt and a Pistachio tahini or with goat's cheese and grapes.

A light lunch for 2-3 or a great starter for 6

12 baby green courgettes
2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
3 tbsp olive oil
flaky sea salt
freshly ground black pepper
juice of 1 lemon

Spices

1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp ground coriander
a pinch of freshly ground black pepper
a pinch of chilli flakes or cayenne pepper ½ tsp ground ginger
½ tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp flaky sea salt

To serve

150 g / 5 ¼ oz black seedless grapes, halved
40 g / 1 ½ oz pine nuts, lightly roasted
1 small bunch of mint, leaves picked
100 g / 3 ½ oz goats' yogurt

Halve the courgettes lengthways and use a small knife to score the flesh with a criss-cross pattern (make sure not to go through to the skin). Set on a tray. Mix the crushed garlic with the olive oil and brush some of this mixture generously over the cut surfaces, then season with salt and black pepper. Place the courgettes cut side down directly on the grill rack, to colour for 3-4 minutes, then flip them over so that they are cut side up. Mix all the spices into the remaining garlic oil to form a thick paste and brush it over the cut surfaces of each courgette, making sure it gets into the scored grooves. Leave to cook for another 3-4 minutes, then remove from the grill onto a serving plate.

Spoon over any remaining garlic-oil paste and drizzle with the lemon juice. Top with the grapes, pine nuts, mint leaves and small dollops of the yogurt, and serve.

To cook without a BBQ

Use a lightly oiled, preheated griddle pan on your stove top and cook just as you would on the fire.

Joojeh kebabs – chicken in yogurt and saffron

Sarit's dream dish on the fire at this time of year is Persian inspired Joojeh kebab served with apricots also cooked on the fire. The first apricots will be with us soon.

Makes 4 large skewers (allow at least one per person)

8 large free-range chicken thighs (boneless and skinless – about 1.2 kg / 2 lb 10 oz net weight)

For the marinade

1 onion, peeled (about 150 g / 5 1/4 oz)

3 garlic cloves, peeled

1 green chilli, halved and deseeded

2 tbsp ras el hanout spice mix

2 tsp salt

1/2 tsp turmeric

zest from 1 lemon

1 pinch of saffron strands

1 tbsp rose water

80 ml / 2 3/4 fl oz water

200 g / 7 oz goats' yogurt

Purée the onion, garlic and chilli together in a food processor. Transfer to a large bowl, then combine with the rest of the marinade ingredients. Add the chicken thighs and mix really well to coat all over. Leave to marinate for at least 2 hours and up to 24 hours.

When you are ready to cook, use double skewers for each kebab (to keep the thighs as flat as possible) and thread with two pieces of marinated chicken. Keep any remaining marinade to baste the chicken as it is grilling.

Roast over good hot coals to caramelize the marinade and develop the sweetness, turning the kebabs every 5 minutes and brushing with leftover marinade after each turn. The chicken will take about 15–20 minutes to cook through. If your BBQ has a lid, covering it for 5 minutes will help the kebabs cook well without charring too much; however, we tend not to do this as we really favour the taste of the charred marinade.

Serve with grilled apricot halves and a small herb salad mixed with orange segments, for a freshness that goes really well with the robust marinade.

To cook without a BBQ

Roast the chicken thighs (no need to skewer them) in a very hot oven (240°C/220°C fan/gas mark 9) for 15–20 minutes, or use a lightly oiled, preheated griddle pan on your stove and cook just as you would on the fire.