

Kay Plunkett-Hogge



'Kay Plunkett-Hogge is a great cook, and the best – and funniest – drinking partner a girl could want. Always fun, always feisty – she is a tonic.'

Diana Henry

ADVENTURES OF A TERRIBLY GREEDY GIRL



Contents

Timeline *10*

Foreword: The Omertà of the Dinner Table *13*

Introduction: Made in Bangkok *15*

1 From Lewisham to Bangkok... with Love *17*

2 And a Turkey in a Palm Tree... *27*

3 Of Time and the Seaside *33*

4 A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Kitchen *42*

5 A Tale of Two Kitchens *51*

6 Girls Will Be Girls *61*

7 "It's ALL Fusion, Stupid!" *67*

8 Carry On Sailing... *73*

9 Hollywood or Bust *79*

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Kitchen

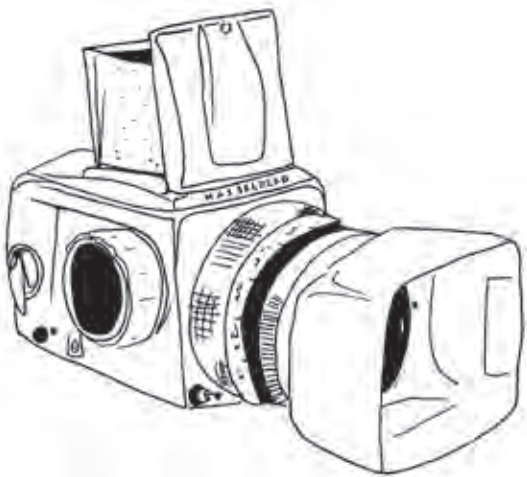
How the hell did I end up here? I ask myself this on a regular basis. I've sold clothes, booked models, insured film finance, coordinated large movies and sung jazz. None of which would lead anyone to think, "Ah, food writing – obviously the next step..."

It was 2002. I had been married less than a year and swore that I was going to have that first year out of work to enjoy the just rewards of waiting until I was 38 to settle down. Then Karen called. Would I come back to Models 1 to look after the older girls? (I'd had a stint there back in the '80s, in the early part of my fashion career, of which more later.)

Every agency I've worked for, and pretty much every agency I know, is broken down into divisions to focus on a specific group of models. There's New Faces, which as you'd expect takes care of the newbies just starting out; there's the Men's division, where I had worked primarily; there's the Main Board – your key girls, the biggest earners. Some agencies might have a Plus-size desk; some might have a Children's division. At Models 1, we had the older girls in a division we called Special Bookings. It represented women who were no longer Main Board but were still in demand, from a few hand-picked celebrities we took care of for commercials and endorsements all the way to the ever-youthful Daphne Selfe and Carmen Dell'Orefice, both well into their seventies at the time and still fabulous (the older I get, the more I want to channel Carmen...).

Now, I hadn't booked a model since 1999. I wasn't sure I could take it. But, being a soft touch, in I went. In six months I had put the division into profit and I had had enough. I felt as if all my energy was being sucked out of me, leaving me feeling like a flat tyre. My long-absent anxiety kicked in – the sort of horror that makes you go over and over and over a document time and again. That made me get off the night bus and head back to the agency to double, triple check the work that had been done that day. I was losing myself down a rabbit hole of my own making. In 1999, when I came back from New York, I had made a decision not to do this job ever again. And here I was. It was time to leave for good.

The final straw was when a certain supermodel called me at home at an ungodly hour of the morning because she didn't feel like going out on the



Sicilian Swordfish

This simple treatment of the mighty swordfish always brings the Sicilian sunshine flooding back. Make sure you use the freshest oregano you can find, and serve with a cracking Caricante from Mount Etna.

SERVES 2

**2 swordfish steaks, just over 1cm
(½ inch) thick**

For the sauce:

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 garlic clove, finely chopped

2 tablespoons sea salt

the juice of ½ a lemon

**2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano
(or 1 of oregano, 1 of flat-leaf
parsley)**

**1 tablespoon capers, chopped
(optional)**

**sea salt and freshly ground black
pepper**

In a small saucepan, gently infuse the olive oil with the garlic over a low heat until fragrant. Do not let the garlic colour. Then set aside to cool.

Dissolve the salt in the lemon juice. Stir in the herbs, then whisk in the olive oil and garlic until emulsified, and season with pepper.

Grill the swordfish steaks over a medium-high heat until cooked, turning once. It should take 5–7 minutes in all. Place them on a serving platter, prick them gently with a fork, and pour over the sauce. Scatter over the capers if using. Serve straight away.



No Slices, Whole Pies Only

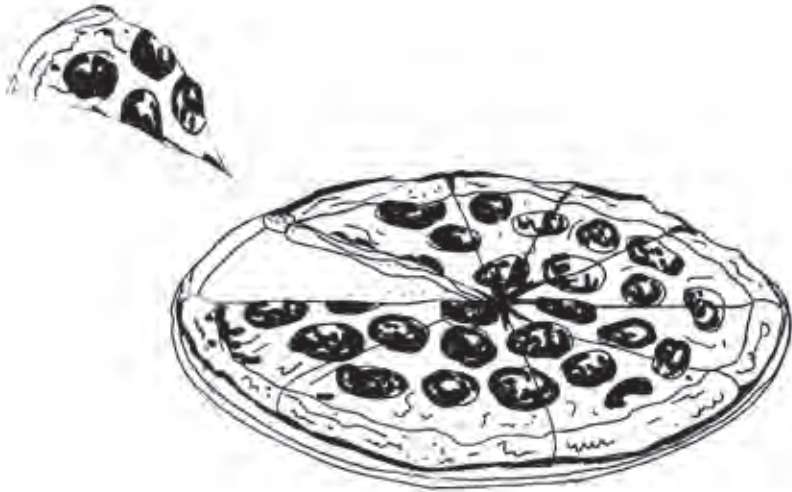
(or How Brooklyn kept me sane)

I didn't love Manhattan. I know, I know – half of New York will want to slaughter me for writing that, but hear me out. For my first few months in New York, I lived in a friend's apartment in Tribeca. On the 49th floor. At first it seemed amazing – this was *New York*, after all. But little by little, it became isolating. My view was the World Trade Center, which looked great from afar but, up close, was just a very big slab of metal and glass. I never saw my neighbours. The wait for the elevator, the journey *in* the elevator, all alone, was lonely. It wasn't home.

I couldn't put my finger on it, but this wasn't my kind of town. Nora Ephron said she knew she was born to live in New York and everything in between was just preparation. I think of New York City as a learning curve on my way to somewhere else.

And then I discovered Brooklyn. I came across it on a whim. I apartment-sat for a friend in a studio so small you had to back into the toilet to sit on the seat. But I fell in love with the area. This is long before Brooklyn was hip. It was still The Neighbourhood. Atlantic Avenue was packed with Middle Eastern shops selling spices, oils and olive-oil soaps. There was a guy on Court Street who sold essential oils wholesale. It was leafy and fresh, and I wanted in. I stalked into the local realtor and demanded an apartment. Preferably on *THAT* street, pointing to the most verdant, just across the way.

It turned out that I was in luck. The woman who was walking out as I was walking in had just listed her apartment. And it was on *THAT* street, just across the way. Within one hour, I had let it, right there, on Wykoff Street. It was beautiful, the basement of a brownstone in Cobble Hill. It looked and felt to me exactly how I thought New York should. If it was 1950. The eat-in kitchen had high tin ceilings, and the bathroom was huge (well, bigger than most – I could at least spread my arms without hitting the wall). There were people sitting on stoops sipping tea or beer. I had *NEIGHBOURS* that I actually spoke to. And who *SPOKE BACK* (take that, Tribeca!). They cooked, and the smells wafted into my kitchen through the open back door. I didn't feel I needed to be armed



About Kay

Kay Plunkett-Hogge is an acclaimed food and drinks writer, and the author of *Make Mine A Martini* (Mitchell Beazley, 2014), *Heat: Cooking With Chillies* (Quercus, 2016) and *A Sherry And A Little Plate Of Tapas* (Mitchell Beazley, 2016).

In addition to writing her own books, Kay has co-authored a further six cookbooks, working with the award-winning chef Bryn Williams on his two books *Bryn's Kitchen* and *For The Love Of Veg*, Academy Award-nominated actor Stanley Tucci on his second cookbook *The Tucci Table*, and with the American pizza guru Chris Bianco. She also co-wrote *Leon: Family and Friends* with John Vincent and *Cook Yourself Thin: Quick and Easy*.

Born and brought up in Bangkok, Kay spent her childhood between two kitchens – inside for Western food, outside for Thai – before forging an international career in the film and fashion industries. It is an experience that has given her an in-depth knowledge of cuisines from all over the world.

Kay began her food career when she set up a bespoke location catering service for fashion shoots. Since then, and in addition to her writing, she has worked as a food consultant for a variety of restaurants and bars, including the Leon chain, The Formosa Café, Isola del Sole- and The Luang Prabang Motorcycle Club.

Her acclaimed book, *Make Mine A Martini*, was the *Financial Times's* pick for drinks book of the year and led to her induction into the Gin Guild (in the words of Heston Blumenthal: “She shakes a damn fine cocktail.”) and her writing regularly on cocktails for the *Daily Telegraph* and *Sainsbury's Magazine*. She has also written for the *FT Weekend*, *Delicious* and *Olive*, and has published recipes in *The Times*, *Hello* and Borough Market's *Market Life* magazine.

She lives in London with her husband, two cats and a dog.

