

## EATING &amp; DRINKING

## IN MY KITCHEN

## Olia Hercules

The author of 'Summer Kitchens' dishes on favorite tools, the pickles overtaking her fridge and the secret to a delicious stock

**P**ERHAPS MORE than any living person, the Ukrainian-British journalist-turned-chef Olia Hercules has laid to rest the tired myth that Soviet cooking is all cabbage and mayonnaise. In her latest cookbook, "Summer Kitchens" (July 14, Weldon Owen), Ms. Hercules returns to her native Ukraine and a unique feature of many homes there. "Apart from having a regular kitchen indoors, we had something else: a separate little house, nothing glamorous—just a one-room brick structure, which we called *litnya kuhnia*, 'summer kitchen,'" she writes. She traveled the country with her husband, the photographer Joe Woodhouse, and the photographer Elena Heatherwick to chronicle these structures, the people who maintain them and the bounty of homegrown produce prepared and preserved within.

On a recent evening, after putting her "milk guzzling infant," Wilf, to bed, Ms. Hercules paused for a chat from her home in East London.

**The kitchen tools I can't live without are:** first, a sharp knife. Second, a heavy granite pestle and mortar. I use it for grinding spices but also for weighing things down: If I make sauerkraut, for example, I'll put a plate over it, then I'll put my mortar on top. Sometimes I use it for bashing nails coming out of the floorboards. The third

necessity is my granny's rolling pin. When my mom gave it to me, she said, "Thousands of dumplings have been rolled out with this one."

**The cookbooks I turn to again and again are:** a vast collection of old Eastern European books found at flea markets in Ukraine or Georgia. In terms of



**GARDEN VARIETY** From top: Olia Hercules with her wood-fired oven; pantry staples Maldon salt, caraway and coriander seeds, *salo* (cured pork fat), Georgian blue fenugreek and *khmeli suneli* from Épices de Cru and vinegars from Vinegar Shed.

**My refrigerator is always stocked with:** at least a kilo of what Ukrainians call *salo*, similar to what Italians call *lardo*—the really fatty bit of the pork belly. You freeze and slice it thinly and have it with rye bread. We cook with it a lot as well. Also jars of kraut, little fermented tomatoes, and sliced beetroot and big chunks

of cabbage that are fermented together. They take up most of the space, which annoys my husband.

**The pot I reach for most is:** my battered old Le Creuset Dutch oven, because I make bread pretty much every two days. It's such a lockdown cliché, sourdough bread, but I have been doing it for years.



in some butter and garlic, add dill and spring onion, and mix in feta cheese and lemon zest.

### Pickled Cabbage Leaves with Beet

This recipe, *pelestyuka*—cabbage leaves pickled with beet—comes from *Nyzhne Selyshche*, a village in *Transcarpathia*. The addition of vinegar here helps the cabbage keep longer and remain crunchy.

**Active Time** 40 minutes **Total Time** Up to 2 weeks **Makes** 2 quarts

**4 teaspoons sea salt**

**½ cup superfine sugar**  
**½ cup raw cider vinegar**  
**1 small green cabbage**  
**1½ ounces horseradish root, peeled and sliced**  
**½ pound fresh beets, peeled and cut into thin wedges**

**1.** Make the brine: Boil just under 1 quart water in a kettle. In a large heatproof bowl, combine salt and sugar. Add

hot water from kettle, stirring to dissolve completely. Stir in vinegar.  
**2.** Core cabbage. (Don't throw the core away: You can chop it up and use it in this recipe, or simply eat it as a snack.) Cut cored cab-



bage in half and then into 4-inch squares. Place horseradish in the base of a sterilized 2-quart jar with a lid. Add a third of the beets, then a third of the cabbage. Continue alternating these two layers until all beets and cabbage are used up.  
**3.** Pour hot brine over cabbage and beets. Let cool to room temperature, and then close the lid.

Leave jar in a warm, dark place until contents become fizzy, 1-2 weeks, depending on the temperature. Once fizzy, move the jar somewhere cooler. (A cellar is ideal, but the fridge will do.) This pickle will keep for ages and will stay sweet, sour and crunchy.

—Adapted from "Summer Kitchens" by Olia Hercules (Weldon Owen)

**On weekends, I like to cook:** quite a few pizzas in the wood-fired oven in the garden. We use the sourdough pizza dough recipe from the "Roberta's Cookbook" and make simple margherita pizzas, maybe with a few jalapeños thrown on. If guests come over we make a big, fresh salad and my Ossetian pies, which are kind of like stuffed pizzas, from north of Georgia. It's a dough made with kefir, and inside you have whatever's in season. Now I'd probably wilt down loads of chard

**My favorite cooking technique is:** *smazhennia*, a Ukrainian version of Italian *soffritto*. The way my mom does it, she skims fat off a stock and puts the fat in a pan. Then you add finely diced onion and soften it until it starts caramelizing. You add grated carrots, and caramelize them with the onion to create a sweet, delicious base. Then you add it to your stock, to sweeten it. It's very simple, but it's one of my most treasured and favorite things to do.

—Edited from an interview by Gabriella Gershenson

## PRO MOVE / INTEL FROM AN EX LINE COOK

## Superior Salad Construction

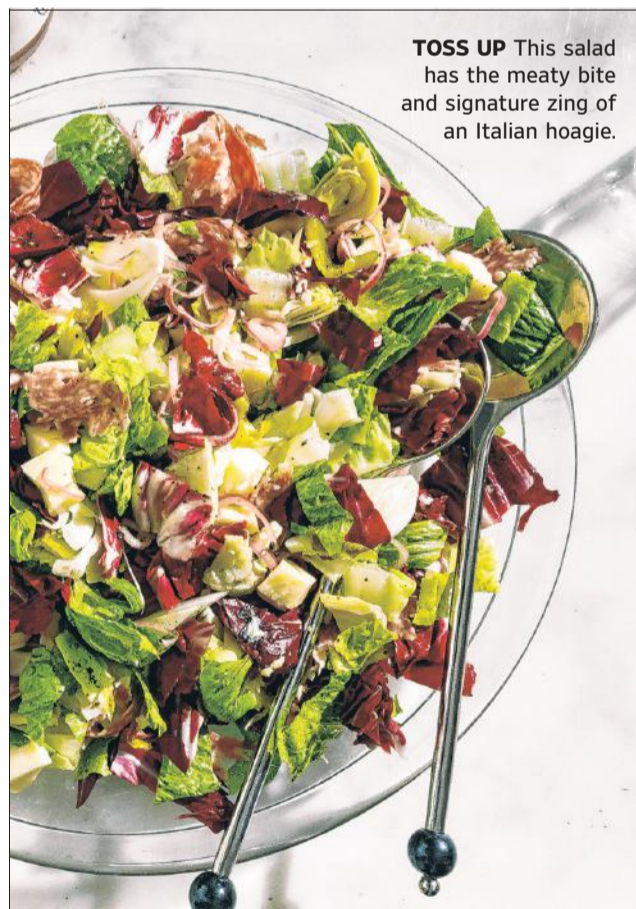
Follow this blueprint and build your best bowl every time

**IT'S TOO HOT** and too many months into lockdown for me to pretend to be excited about cooking. Merely washing the dishes is daunting. Give me a recipe that can be prepared in a single bowl, without so much as looking at the stove. Give me this hoagie salad.

Maybe, in your neck of the woods, you refer to the Italian-American sandwich that inspired it as a sub or a grinder. Whatever you call it, the combo of cured meat, cheese, pepperoncini, onions and lettuce doused with oil and vinegar qualifies as a classic. And it works every bit as well in a salad bowl as it does between slabs of bread.

The architectural principles at play are the same. As in the construction of a sandwich, the salad's success relies on the order in which you layer on the different ingredients. Begin by letting the shallots and vinegar macerate together in the bottom of the salad bowl. As the shallots mellow and soften, you can prep the other elements. Heavier, harder ingredients that can stand up to some jostling and extra marinating—your fennel, your artichoke hearts—go into the bowl next. Then the pepperoncini, salami and provolone. The tender salad greens go in last, to preserve their verve, along with olive oil and a squirt of lemon juice to wrap up the vinaigrette you began with the shallots. Each element maintains its individual appeal and capacity to stand up to others. This is a salad you can sink your teeth into.

—Eleanore Park



**TOSS UP** This salad has the meaty bite and signature zing of an Italian hoagie.

**Hoagie Salad**  
**Total Time** 25 minutes  
**Serves** 4 as a main course, 8 as a side salad

**1 medium shallot, thinly sliced**  
**3 tablespoons apple-cider vinegar or red-wine vinegar**  
**½ large fennel bulb, trimmed and thinly sliced lengthwise**  
**½ cup canned or jarred artichoke hearts, drained and roughly chopped**  
**¼ cup jarred sliced pepperoncini, drained**  
**2 ounces salami or soppressata, torn into bite-size pieces**  
**4 ounces provolone, torn into bite-size pieces (about ¾ cup)**  
**8 cups chopped mixed**

**greens such as radicchio, romaine and/or Little Gem lettuce**  
**3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**  
**Juice of ½ lemon, plus more to taste**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**1.** In a large bowl, combine shallots and vinegar. Let sit until shallots soften and turn bright pink, at least 20 minutes. Add fennel and artichoke hearts. Then add pepperoncini, salami and provolone. Toss to combine.  
**2.** Add mixed greens, olive oil and lemon juice. Toss together gently until ingredients are evenly distributed. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and with more lemon juice as needed. Serve immediately.



## A Hot Exclusive. Pure Linen Suits \$250

As part of our *Frank Stella Summer Suit Collection* and for that well traveled man-of-the-world look, our lightweight 100% linen suits are now on sale and offered at the incredible price of \$250 each.

The perfect choice for warm weather comfort. Available in choice of navy, khaki or natural.

Reg. \$395, **Sale \$250 ea.**

## Summertime & the Linen's Easy! \$200

Crafted from a lightweight, softwashed 100% linen fabric, our unstructured sportcoats are breathable and soft and the key to summer comfort. You'll look sharp and keep cool in these two-button, tailored fit jackets.

Available in your choice of navy blue, light blue or tan.

Reg. \$295 ea. **Sale \$200**



### NEW YORK LOCATIONS

**921 7th Ave.** (cor. 58 st.)  
M-Sat. 11-6, Sun. Closed  
(212) 957-1600

**440 Columbus Ave.** (cor. 81 st.)  
M-Sat. 11-6, Sun. 12-6  
(212) 877-5566

Please visit us online:  
[www.frankstellanyc.com](http://www.frankstellanyc.com)

**FREE SHIPPING!**

Find Us on Facebook.com/frankstellanyc

Find Us on Instagram.com/frankstellanyc

Phone Orders Accepted