



FIT FOR LIFE

Ready for my close up

Carol Westmorland gives a starring role to Mediterranean food in the kitchen

I like my food colourful. I also like control, perfection and drama. A brush with TV stardom thwarted on two counts. It made me think. A lot as it turned out. I am a foodie. I am a hostess. Will I now remain a hidden talent? When asked by the TV crew my favourite kitchen utensil perhaps I did myself an injustice by saying: 'my husband'. That, and my inability to tell the truth. My least favourite dinner party guests? 'Men'. A lie.

It's February - the shortest but also, I find, the longest of months. As far as I can see its only saving grace is Valentine's Day snuck in the middle. I'm being drawn to the Mediterranean.

So, if anyone fancies joining my Mediterranean soirée then gather with me around my substantial kitchen table - all 220 by 120cm of it. To begin we are going to toast the late, great Elizabeth David who, if she were alive today, would be celebrating being 100 years of age.

Without ED, as she signed herself, we would not have the freestanding kitchen with the enormous entertaining table and the boldness we have today. Instead we would have anonymous neutral affairs with nothing so much as a handle. Oh, some of you do. Well, I certainly don't. Our kitchen is a shrine to ED.

ED wrote cookery books and her debut, *A Book of Mediterranean Food*, changed the nation's attitude to eating. She was deeply hostile to poor food. I share her belief which is something else I omitted to tell the TV crew sensing their need for theatre.



'WHEN ASKED BY THE TV CREW MY FAVOURITE KITCHEN UTENSIL I SAID: 'MY HUSBAND''

The Mediterranean - sun, sea and olive trees set against an azure sky. We may not have any dazzling sunshine or olive trees but we can bring some much needed colour into our kitchens and breathe some health into February.

Mediterranean diets are bathed in olive oil and wrapped in richness. It is where the food grew up not the style of food that makes the Mediterranean diet special. Rather than use butter, bread is dipped in olive oil with lots of garlic and herbs. Less salt. Legumes are slowly roasted and fish is baked with blushing tomatoes and onions. It is the diet of the taste-conscious. It is also known to be the diet of health. The feast will include courgettes, spinach, aubergine, garlic, tomatoes, peppers and oranges. The more colour on your plate the better. My ultimate favourite, the chickpea, is allowed as long as it brings with it a friend.

Can someone make that call? I wish to give vegetables a starring role in my kitchen drama. Maybe I am camera-ready after all.