

# 'IN THE NEWS'

Salthouse & Peppermongers are the UK's leading gourmet salt and pepper specialists. We have been:

- No.5 in The Times Top 25 Most Stylish Xmas Gifts for Foodies 2015
- No.15 in the Observer Food Monthly's top trends for 2015
- Featured on BBC1, as well as in The Telegraph, The Guardian & Delicious Magazine



# THE TIMES

#### the table

The 25 most stylish gifts for foodies

## Day 4

Carolyn Asome picks the gifts gourmands really want under the tree this Christmas



9 Butchery class 9 voucher, £155, at thegingerpig.co.uk 10 Chocolate subscription, from £16.55, at cooper-plated cafetire, £140, at mrporter.com 12 Arbiticas spices, thop-arbiticas poices, 13 Flowering 13 Flowering 14 Marbide rolline choitime.com 14 Marble rolling pin and stand, £28, at johnlewis.com 15 cheeseboard

SALTHOUS

and knives, £69, at oliverbonas.com 16 Janie Oliver pasta machine, £40, at debenhams.com 17 Ferm brass poons, £52, at naken.co.uk 18 £2750, at torimurphy.com 19 Agra marble £55, at habitat.co.uk 20 Jakob Heiberg Conico Cheese Grater, £69, at commshop.co.uk 21 E34.95, at handpicked handpicked collection.com 22 Celestino Lemon Liqueur, £22, at conranstore.co.uk

23 Minipresso portable espr machine, £48, at bearandbear.com 24 Muraglia Extra Virgin Olive Oil, £29 for 500ml, at amazon.co.uk 25 Deliciously Ella Pecipe book, by Ella Woodward, £15,

waterstones con

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5 SALT ROCK SALT

PEPPERMONGERS

# The Telegraph

#### parsley.



Seasons to be cheerful Complete indulgence for salt and pepper freaks - Peppermongers, the specialist in exotic peppercorns (Indonesian long pepper, for example, £3.95 for 32g), has teamed up with salthouseonline.com, which stocks 40 types of salt (Bali Baby Kechil harvested from the Lombok Strait, £2.99 per 60g).



erson's tasting notes A toast to St George ack Fox Cider, Herefordshire £2.29 (500ml), Waitrose Cider has ble renaissance in the past few years. This is made from a blend of traditional s grown organically in one of the drink's strongholds. Herefordshire It reminde

Sushi school grew up in Jap at Le Cordon E Chicago and h 



### The Observer Magazine



# **Strawberries forever**

For a truly summery feast, build your whole meal around strawberries. Just be sure to choose the smallest

The first strawberries to ripen are the so-called wild ones. (Wild as in rampage rather than habitat.) Each one barely bigger than an old-fashioned midget gem, they hide under their leaves, creating a secret world of tiny berries, a place of safety from the birds who like nothing more than a strawberry tea. Despite their prolific tendencies, growing in pots, rose beds and in the crevices of the garden paths, there are never enough ripe at the same time for any sort of recipe. They are eaten during my early-morning walk around the garden. There are worse ways to start the day.

This is the year the larger, cultivated varieties ran amok in the vegetable beds, challenging even the rainbow chard for ground space. The first to turn from green to white was Pegasus, a medium berry known as much for its resistance to mildew as for its flavour. Together with Gariguette, Chelsea Pensioner and Florence, they are part of my attempt to get back the smaller berries I love



rather than the shop-bought ones, which seem to get bigger and uglier each year. A packet turned up in my kitchen last week with fruit almost the size of clementines. A berry that had lost all charm and magic, numped up out of all recomition

pumped up out of all recognition. The wet weather does nothing for fruit growing so close to the ground. A packing of straw around each plant has helped but can encourage mould. Pine needles make a good protector, too. I have made a note to save the branches from my Christmas tree. But what about those lacklustre

fruits, the ones that won't ripen or that looked promising but failed to deliver? A little sugar sprinkled over the cut berry helps, but I don't always want to add sugar to my berries. The traditional black-pepper thing didn't really work for me until I swapped my usual black pepper for long pepper. Long and thin rather than round, I often think this is the most beautiful spice of all. The flavour, a little deeper and, I think, sweeter than the norm, seems to lend itself to desserts. I was introduced to it by Tom Alcott of the Bristol-based Peppermongers, who stirred it into cream to accompany raspberries. He recommends using it on nectarines, although mixing it with cream was the real revelation for me. This week I added it to puff-pastry palmiers to go with some strawberries.

The other essential ingredient for perking up a berry is balsamic vinegar. Occasionally it's found in inappropriate places, but the dark, sticky vinegar's real reason for living is to tease flavour from a strawberry. You only need a little – and it does sound daft, but it works.

> I eat the tiny berries as I walk around the garden. There are worse ways to start the day

#### STRAWBERRY AND BLACK PEPPER PALMIERS

Grind the long pepper in a mill or using a pestle and mortar. Black pepper can also be used. Start with a little, just two or three decent pinches over the pastry.

#### Serves 6

For the palmiers: puff pastry 375g egg 1, beaten caster sugar 3 tbsp, plus a little extra ground black or long pepper

For the filling: double cream 150ml ricotta 200g plstachlos 50g shelled weight, chopped long pepper 2 or 3 tails vanilla extract a drop or two

strawberries 12

DIRECTIONS

Place the puff pastry on a lightly floured work surface or wooden board and roll out to a rectangle about 40x30cm. Brush with a little beaten egg, sprinkle with the caster sugar then lightly with the ground pepper. With the long side towards you, loosely roll each short side inwards until they meet in the middle. brushing with more egg, sugar and pepper as you go. You should have a thick, flat roll of pastry.

Slice the pastry into 12 pieces lengthways. Roll each long slice out a little more, depending on how thin you want your paimiers to be in the end, then place all the slices flat on a baking sheet. Put them in the fridge for about 20 minutes before baking. Set the oven at 200C/gas mark 6, then sprinkle over a little more sugar and bake for 15–20 minutes until risen and golden. Remove from the baking sheet and cool on a wire rack.

For the filing, put the cream in a cold bowl and whisk it gently until it starts to thicken, then gently fold in the ricotta, the pistachlos, a few grinds of pepper if you wish, and some vanilla extract.

Place half of the paimiers on a serving plate and civide the cream between them. Share the strawberries between them and place the remaining paimiers on top.

# LTHOU PEPPERMONGERS

## **Observer Food Monthly**



#### R PEPPERMONGERS' SICHUAN PEPPER

Sichuan pepper, commonly known in Chinese as "flower pepper", is one of the signature spices of Sichuanese cooking, prized not for its heat but for its cool, lip-tingling sensation and citrussy fragrance. Until recently, it was hard to find consistently zingy Sichuan pepper in the UK, but Tom Alcott and Pete Gibbons are doing their best to change that. Their company, Peppermongers, seeks out the stuff that actually makes your lips tingle, selling it alongside a range of other peppery spices. "People love the zing and the zest of it," says Alcott. "If they've never tasted it before, it catches them completely by surprise." Use Sichuan flower pepper in stews and stir-fries, or dry-roast in a wok and then grind to a fine powder to use as a sprinkle or a magic ingredient in sauces and dressings. FUCHSIA DUNLOP

## **Daily Record**



### Salted chocolate

buttons These buttons look amazing and taste heavenly. The key to success is to use a really good quality chocolate and Balinese sea salt finishing salt. If you can't find the right nuts or the candied peel, get whatever you can and experiment.

#### Makes: 12

INGREDIENTS 120g dark chocolate 2 tablespoons chopped pistachio nuts 4 tablespoons of flaked almonds 1 teaspoon caster sugar 2 pinches Balinese sea salt finishing salt 1 teaspoon candied peel

#### **METHOD**

Preheat the oven to 180C. Layer the almonds evenly on a baking tray and roast in the oven for two or three minutes. They should just be starting to change colour. Take the almonds from the

oven and sprinkle with the sugar. Stick them back in the oven for one more minute. Melt all the chocolate in a bowl. This is best done in a heat-proof bowl over a pan of

heat-proof bowl over a pan of simmering water. Break the chocolate into small chunks and then heat. Before it is all melted, remove from the heat and stir gently. The remaining heat should finish off melting the checility.

the chocolate. Take a tray that will fit into

your fridge and line with baking paper. Drop large button-sized drops of the chocolate into the tray. While still warm, scatter over the almonds and over the almonds and pistachios and sprinkle the

salt and candied peel. Chill in fridge for about 30 Minutes and scatter over

more nuts before serving

# delicious.

January 2013

# People • memories • heroes

SALTHOUSE & PEPPERMONGERS

Living the dream "Saying it's just pepper is like saying champagne is just sparkling plonk"



Meet the double act bringing proper pepper to people's plates (try saying that quickly after a few drinks). Tom Alcott and Pete Gibbons are the bosses of Bristolbased company Peppermongers

did you two meet

TOM We've known each other since we were four – Pete lived at number 46 and I was across the road at number 45, on a street in St Ives in Cambridgeshire. We bonded over The Muppets. I come from a foodie family - I was scared to bring friends home from school because my mum would be there, sawing off a pig's head.

How did you get into pepper? PETE Five years ago we were both working for Tom's wife's ethical water company. At the end of one of our trips to Kerala in India we spent three days learning about pepper. It was fascinating. TOM Yes, a fellow Bristolian suggested we went to check out

pepper growers. We did and are so glad we did – it was a revelation to learn about good, proper pepper, and we couldn't understand why it was so hard to get in the UK. We pooled our skills and went from there. I'm interested in the history of pepper, too: the East India Company and all that. You get a sense of the old spice trade when you visit places like Kerala. What's the key to your success? TOM You're buying from Tom and Pete. For the big companies, pepper is a commodity for making as much profit as they can. We want to focus on respecting the soil, getting away from mass consumerism and getting back to a more ethical way

of farming. We work by the Aristotelian concept of eudaimonia. It's about doing right by everyone – suppliers, customers, farmers – not doing the bare minimum and trying to get away with it. nges do vou face

PETE It can be difficult to get people to taste the pepper – they can't see the value initially. TOM It's like someone saying champagne is just sparkling plonk. On one level that's true, but it's a matter of education about how much better pepper can be. Our challenge is that our stuff needs to be tasted to be believed and there's no scratch-and-sniff internet yet. What traits have helped

PETE Ignorance has helped. We don't have any baggage, so we're full of enthusiasm. TOM And delusion. Why else would

we be taking on the big boys? You soon come to appreciate the reality, but wanting to navigate obstacles helps you to keep going. PETE As does a huge dose of event lust.

good luck. Do you have any advice to give

TOM Don't do it! I'm joking, of course - the more the merrier. Dealing with customs, international currency trading, the whole supply chain – it's a huge challenge but it's rewarding. We're rediscovering proper pepper. • Peppermongers products are available at Harvey Nichols in London and in farm shops. The range includes Tellicherry Black Pepper, Indonesian Long Pepper, Javanese Cubeb Pepper and Sichuan Flower Pepper. Each pack costs £4. peppermongers.co.uk



# The Telegraph

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/10383028/Forget-plain-black-pepper-

why-not-try-Himalayan-pink-instead.html

HOME » FOOD AND DRINK

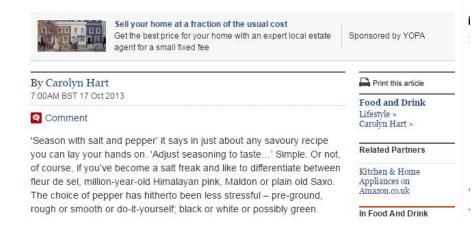
Forget plain black pepper - why not try Himalayan pink instead?

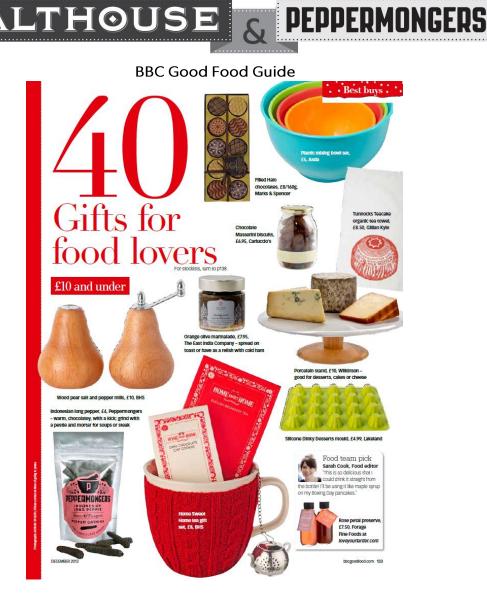
Certain peppers are a cut above the common condiment, but the British remain woefully ignorant





'Pepper is like chocolate or wine; the difference between good and bad is huge, you just don't know it until you've tried the good stuff' Photo: Line Thit Klein





## **Evening Standard**





### **Fork Magazine**

# Producer profile Peppermongers

BRINGING PROPER PEPPER TO THE TASTEBUDS OF THE UK, THE TEAM BEHIND THIS INNOVATIVE COMPANY ARE ON A MISSION TO UNLEASH THE REAL SPICE OF LIFE INTO THE MOUTHS OF THE BRITISH PUBLIC

ands up who can sketch a pepper plant? Thought not Isn't it strange that while we all use pepper, and despite the recent vogue for 'proper' salt, no one has paid much attention to this oft-used spice. Step in Tom Alcott and Pete Gibbons who found themselves wondering exactly this, when despite using pepper at least three times a day, realised they didn't even know what it looked like. Tom tells me "I didn't even know whether it was a tree, a berry or a nut" What followed was a six-year odyssey around the world discovering pepper and the launch of a new company, Peppermongers.

No strangers to the world of food and drink, they already run Frank water, the charity that sells bottled water to raise money for clean water projects in India, with Tom's wife Katie. It was on a trip to India for Frank that they discovered proper pepper. Returning to England, they tried to find it and when they couldn't, decided to source it themselves and make a business out of it. Tom says: "the more I looked into it, the more I realised we don't understand anything about pepper in this country. We eat so much bad pepper yet we use it 10 times more than any other spice."

He tells me that "starting Peppermongers has been the most amazing journey because the history of pepper is fascinating." The Age of Discovery was all about pepper. It originally came from the Malabar Coast of India, and when Columbus found the West Indies, he was actually looking for pepper in the East Indies. Vasco De Gama found America when he was looking for cheap pepper as it used to be worth more than gold. So, as Tom explains, "pepper was behind the birth of map-making and cartography." He quotes William Blake 'To see a world in a grain of sand... hold infinity in the palm of your hand,' and tells me you can do that with a peppercorn, which is really rather romantic. Yet he's right; stories of international trade, globalisation and world

cuisine are all contained in its deep spicy aroma. Tom pulls an assortment of tins out of a battered leather bag and lays them before him. He carefully takes a peppercorn out and offers it up

for inspection. "This is the world's best pepper," he proudly says holding up a "Tellicherry garbled special extra bold." Grown in Kerala and referred to as TGSEB – this catchy title is from the Indian grading system; to garble pepper is to filter and clean it. The tinv pod sits in mv hand, and with one sniff I'm carried

away to eastern plantations, Spice Islands, exotic souks and the mysterious unknown. It smells nothing like the pepper on my kitchen table at home. And that, Tom says "is exactly the problem with the pepper most of us eat every day." We tend to eat ready ground pepper, but the black shell holds the aroma and the inner seed has the heat – the volatile oils. When you crack pepper the volatile oils are released, they disappear and are gone. "It's like wine, you open it and then you wouldn't drink it after a couple of days. If you want good pepper, crack it in a pestle and mortar just before you eat it." And like wine, chocolate and coffee, you can determine complex tasting notes for pepper.

He then holds up a long pepper catkin from Java. It resembles a miniature slender and smooth pinecone; small enough to sit on my finger. It's beautiful, smells sweet and pungent and looks nothing like any pepper I've ever seen. Tom adds: "We are only interested in the world's best pepper," – less than 10% of the crop. When you buy pepper from us, you'll be getting the best and I guarantee you will notice the difference." The Tellicherry comes from co-operative plantations in India. Most are organic, some certified and some not, but all are grown alongside cocoa, nutmeg, cloves, ginger and cardamom.

There are four variants in the range. Putting the longtail away, Tom pulls out a Tailed Cubeb Comet Pepper from Sumatra. It smells completely different and yet again I am instantly whisked away by its warm and evocative aroma. The fourth pepper is the Hua Jiao Pepper Pod from Sichuan Province in China. It's a fiery red peppercorn that tingles on the tongue and contains a tantalising citrus aroma.

He leaves me with this thought: "Pepper is the most amazing thing, it's not only used in cooking but it's also an aphrodisiac and is used in medicines too." The Peppermongers are hoping to change the way we look at pepper and I don't think they have their work cut out. One snift of this and you'll never look at a pot of ground pepper in the same way again.

>www.peppermongers.co.uk

www.forkmagazine.com 33

## The Guardian





hat do we know about pepper? Peps up your food. Makes you sneeze. Was once a greyish powder a pot. Tends, these

SALTHOUSE &

sprinkled from a pot. Tends, these days, to be wizened black berries crushed in a grinder. Costs not much for a small jar at the supermarket.

So far, so exciting. But there is no stopping progress, and, as with olive oil, salt and other basics we once considered boring, pepper is going gourmet. This is not necessarily a bad thing because there is rather more to pepper than you might think.

"It's just the most amazing stuff," says Tom Alcott, one half of a company called Peppermongers that, six months ago, started importing and selling four high-quality, very different varieties of peppercorn.

"Hold a peppercorn and you have world history in your hand," says Alcott. "Ancient India, Rome, the voyages of discovery, the Raj. Our earliest trade routes. A spice so precious it once paid ransoms. This fabulous flavour in Asian, African, European cooking. And yet somehow it has become this bland, uniform, everyday commodity."

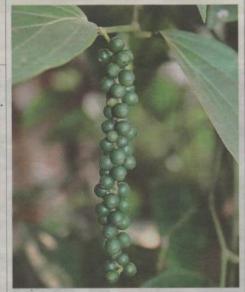
Our oldest and most important spice - pepper still accounts for 20% of the world spice trade - has been valued for more than 3,000 years. The plant is native to Kerala, south-west India (the Mahabharata epic, written in the fourth century BC, sings its praises), spreading later to Indonesia and other parts of southern Asia.

A lucrative trade with the Roman ompire, by sea across the Indian Ocean and then overland to the Mediterranean, was flourishing as early as the first century AD; Pliny writes of black pepper, complaining that there was "no year in which India does not drain the Roman empire of 50m sesterces". In AD408, when the Visigoths laid siege to Rome, the marauding hordes were persuaded to leave by mountains of gold, silver, silken tunics and richly painted hides – plus a ton-and-a-half of peppercoms.

After Rome finally fell, Arab, Venetian and Genoese traders took over. In medieval Europe, peppercoms were valuable enough to be accepted for dowries and taxes ("peppercom rent", nowadays a nominal sum, then meant the opposite). Pepper, perhaps, changed history: the world-shrinking sea route to India around Africa, even the broader European discovery and colonisation of the Americas, were in large part driven by the desire for a slice of the precious spice trade. And then, as the transport got easier

And then, as the transport got eas and the supply multiplied, pepper

12 The Guardian 23.08.12



It is our oldest, most important spice, yet for years it has been neglected. Now, says **Jon Henley**, it is finally getting the gourmet treatment

Pepper's progress

In medieval

peppercorns

Europe,

accepted

for dowries

and taxes

were

gradually became just another commodity: inexpensive, and often of very poor quality.

"Whereas in fact," says Pete Gibbons, the other half of Peppermongers, "there are many hundreds of varieties of pepper, each one with its own distinct aroma, flavour and pungency. And everything - from how it grows on the vine to the time it is harvested and how it is dried, graded and stored - can affect the quality of the peppercoms we eat."

These days, Vietnam is the world's largest producer of black pepper; global output swings between 250,000 and 350,000 tonnes a year. Every pepper cultivar, bearing exotic names such as Lampong, Malabar, Sarawak or Wayanad, can produce green, black and white peopercorns. For black

and white peppercorns. For black pepper, the berries are harvested by hand when fully grown, but still green, then dried mechanically or in the sun. 'The most amazing stuff' ... a pepper spike on the vine

PEPPERMONGERS

The outer, fleshy layer darkens and shrinks, giving the peppercorns their characteristic wrinkled appearance.

Green pepper is made from immature green fruits, which are dehydrated, pickled or bottled. White pepper is actually the inner seed of the berry alone, with the fleshy outer layer removed by soaking. Pepper's spicy heat comes from a

Pepper's spicy heat comes from a compound called piperine, present in both the seed and the outer layer. But it is the outer layer and volatile essential oils that give each variety its distinct aroma and flavour; it follows that white pepper will give you the required burn, but nothing of the rest.

That is a shame, because there is a lot to enjoy. Tasting Alcott and Gibbons's varieties fresh-ground on late summer strawberries, the differences are genuinely startling.

Tellicherry Garbled Special Extra Bold, officially the highest-quality black pepper in the world, has a biting heat but a distinctive fresh, fruity, woody aroma. Peppercorns are classified as "bold", "extra bold" or "special extra bold", according to their colour, but also graded by size. Only 10% of the crop makes the TGSEB grade.

A classic Indonesian pepper, Javanese Cubeb, is noticeably milder in pungency, with strong notes of pine and eucalyptus (Gibbons says the corns were once used as a breath-freshener and the Victorians smoked Cubeb cigarettes). Sichuan flower pepper isn't actually black pepper at all, but the aromatic flower of a bush related to the prickly ash. It exudes a powerful, numbing heat, with floral and citrus aromas.

Perhaps the most striking is Indonesian Long Pepper, which the Observer food writer Nigel Slater recently described as "the most beautiful spice of all". It comes in long, catkin-like tails, with a strong, spicy but sweet and rounded flavour; it smells of freshly turned earth, nutmeg and cinnamon.

In her highly readable book Pepper: The Spice that Changed the World, Christine McFadden quotes the great chef Louis Diat, observing that "no other spice can do so much for so many different types of food".

So as we pay ever-more attention to the provenance and quality of what we eat, it doesn't seem too excessive to start paying this most ancient of spices a bit more respect - by exploring its many varieties and, perhaps, demanding a little more than the usual jar of lowgrade pepper at the supermarket.



a mawak over a hish -try the onion until it ered pepper and tened and the inth gold. Remove ik and set aside. Add sining oil to the wox then the garger and garls. Put et in a single layer in the and leave for 30 seconds, or a coust has formed on the trom of each size, then size try A minutes until it has lost its inkness. Add the cumin and conlander stablis and toss for 30 seconds until tragrant. Add the onion, red proper and the light sol falloce and trost. Sprinkle in the conunder leaves, tors again and serve with steamed nor.

SALTHOUSE

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She shot to fame with her Little Parls Kitchen TV show – now Rachel shares her foodle secrets in an unnissable weekly column unnissable weekly column

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