

Celebrate the scallop

Treating yourself to fresh

LAST
Wine Bar & Restaurant

seasonal produce is the best way to cope with the after-effects of too much Christmas stodge. **ROB PARKER**, the new head chef at Norwich's Last Wine Bar, continues our monthly look at seasonal food with a celebration of the scallop.

When we have scallops on the menu at The Last, they are always very popular – and yet many people seem nervous about cooking scallop dishes for themselves. I'm not sure why this should be, perhaps it is the fact that they are rarely seen in supermarkets (and are often pre-frozen when they do appear).

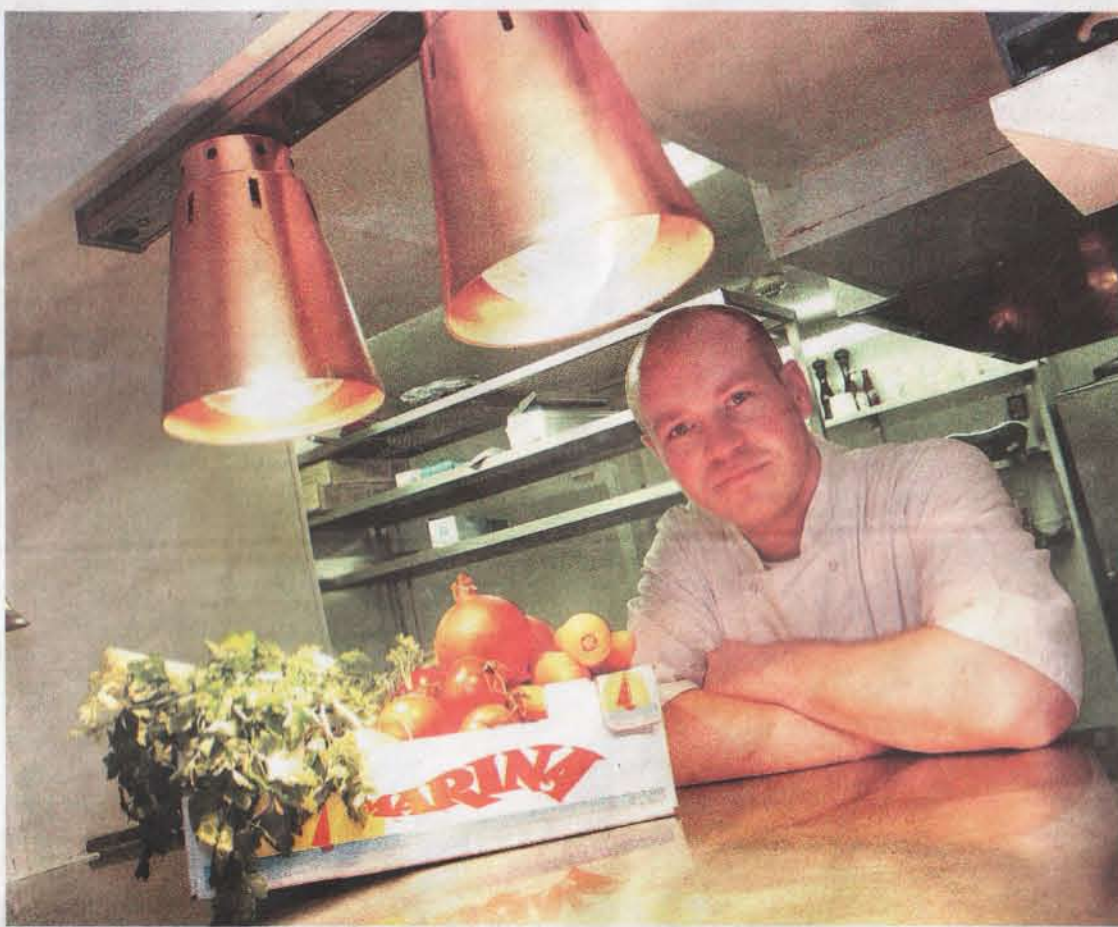
All I can say is that you should get down to a specialist fishmonger and find out what you are missing. Scallops are very easy to cook. The secret is to cook them very briefly – they will go dry and rubbery very quickly.

Scallops are found throughout the Atlantic, Pacific and Mediterranean, and there are a number of varieties, varying in size – the biggest can have shells seven inches across. UK waters now produces excellent specimens, especially off the west coast of Scotland.

Both the soft, round white part (the adductor muscle) and the orange roe are edible, and in fact you can use the frilly part of the scallop (the gills and mantle) to make a delicious stock for fish soup.

Your options are to buy them still in shell, or loose – that is, removed from the shell.

The latter may be easier, but if you can't watch the fishmonger remove them from their shell in front of you, then you need to



check whether they have been frozen. You can tell this, because a fresh scallop are translucent and creamy-grey, whereas frozen scallops are pure white, and look milky. I would go for fresh every time.

There are two ways of harvesting scallops. The most common is bottom-trawling, which as the name suggests, involves dragging a net or dredge across the sea floor. Hand-caught scallops, which are harvested by divers, are much more expensive, but have the advantage that they do not accumulate the sand which dredging can cause. And hand-picking is considerably less damaging to the marine environment.

As well as being delicious on their own, scallops go very well with robust meaty flavours, such

as chorizo, bacon or black pudding. In this month's recipe I have paired them with some lovely Bury black puddings from DJ Barnard.

You may be slightly surprised by one of the ingredients in the dressing: tomato ketchup. I'm a big fan of this wonder food, which unlike many 'processed' ingredients, is actually very healthy, and preserves much of the health-giving goodness of the tomato. And it imparts a lovely sweet vinegarness, which lifts the dressing. Yes, chef's secrets can be quite disappointingly prosaic sometimes.

Incidentally, the scallop shell is imbued with symbolism all over the world. As well as being the symbol of New York, it is perhaps best known as the traditional emblem of St James (hence the

French name for them, St-Jacques). Medieval Christians making the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain carried a scallop shell, which they would present at churches and castles, where they could expect to be given as much sustenance as they could pick up with one scoop – thus even the poorest household could give charity without being overburdened – although I imagine those seven inch scallop shells were much prized!
Next month: Cabbage

What's In Season

Fruit/veg: Blood oranges, Seville oranges, turnips, carrots, kale, pears
Meat/fish: Venison, duck, turbot

Pan Fried Scallops, Black Pudding, Crostini, Red Chard And Tomato Dressing

Serves 4

For the scallops

12 large scallops (available from Howard's fishmonger in Fye Bridge Street)
drizzle of olive oil
25g butter, in little cubes
Maldon sea salt and ground white pepper

For the dressing

150ml ground nut oil
50ml white wine vinegar
50ml tomato ketchup
1tsp Worcester sauce
3 drops of Tabasco
100g chopped shallots
5g chervil
20g tarragon
salt & pepper

For the crostini

1 ciabatta loaf or part baked baguette
Drizzle of olive oil
Clove of garlic cut in half
Maldon sea salt and ground white pepper
2 black pudding sausages (I get mine from D J

Barnard butchers)

100g red chard leaves

■ First remove the roe from the scallop (the orange bit) and the little white muscle as well. Your fishmonger will do this for you if you ask. Put them in a bowl and drizzle with oil, and season them with salt and pepper.

■ Now to make the dressing: chop the herbs and mix all the ingredients together, then check the seasoning and add salt and pepper to your own taste.

■ To cook the black puddings, slice them into 12 discs and grill for a minute on each side.

■ For the crostini, slice the bread into 12 slices about 1 cm thick. Rub each slice with the garlic clove, then drizzle the oil over each slice. Now toast them under a medium grill until lightly golden.

■ Heat a frying pan until it's smoking hot. Now very carefully put each scallop in the frying pan one at a time, cooking each scallop for only 45 seconds on each side.

■ When all the scallops have been turned over put the butter in and allow foam all round the scallops, then take the pan off the heat.

■ Now it's all ready to eat, put it together like the picture and enjoy!



Nibbles

■ Did restaurateur, designer and former Habitat man Sir Terence Conran (pictured) wake up to some Norfolk kippers for breakfast on Christmas morning? We only ask because asked by a national newspaper what foodie gifts he'd like in his festive stocking, Sir



Terence wasted no time in requesting Cley kippers. "I love smoked kippers," he stated. "And for more than 30 years, Cley Smokehouse has been producing freshly smoked fish and delicious homemade pâtés." He's known as a trendsetter, so get them while you can, £4.60 a pair of kippers. More details: 01263-740282

www.cleysmokehouse.com

■ It enough to make you drop your gobstopper. A new store specialising in all things sugary has opened in Dereham. Mother-of-two Sandra Eglington has opened the SugaCane shop, the first franchise based on a successful sweetie shop based in Bakewell, Derbyshire. The range of hand made confectionary features everything from the traditional old favourites to the brand's own inventions as well as an extensive range of liquorice, toffee, candy canes, fudge and nougat. Mrs Eglington, a trained chef, said: "Now Woolworths has gone I thought there was nothing in Dereham to replace it. The shop has a traditional feel because of the glass jars everywhere and the old fashioned sweets. It's colourful and vibrant."

www.sugacane.co.uk

■ Proving that what's good for the chain coffee shops is good for the local producers, vegetarian restaurant Pulse, in Labour in Vain Yard, off Guildhall, has launched its own coffee club card and takeaway service. Buy nine take away coffees get one free.

■ If you're still nursing a New Year hangover, look away now. Norfolk's Wolf Brewery has launched a selection of their excellent ales in five litre home casks, for people who think a bottle is just not enough. The £20 casks, available on its online shop, include Straw Dog, Golden Jackal, Coyote, Wolf Ale and Granny Wouldn't Like It. Bet she would.

www.wolfbrewery.com

■ Fresh from another stall selling Chinese and Asian ingredients opening on Norwich Market, an Oriental market has also launched in the former, er, adult toys shop at the bottom of St John Maddermarket.

■ A food-based board game designed by Norwich schoolchildren has been launched in John Lewis. Norfolk's Fine Food is an innovative game in which players have to collect locally produced ingredients to create a healthy meal. Food-lovers also had the chance to taste ice cream from Lakenham Creamery, produce from North Walsham-based HFG farm shops, Caley's chocolate and Mrs Temple's cheese. The game began life as the school's entry to the 2007 Food and Farming Challenge, a competition organised by the educational charity Norfolk Education Industry and Commerce Group. Two-years on, the game is now being marketed nationwide. It has also been distributed to more than 300 Norfolk primary schools, and endorsed by Michelin-starred chef Galton Blackiston of Morston Hall.

www.orchardtoys.co.uk

■ Food, restaurant and pub news can be emailed to goingout@archant.co.uk