

= Elizabeth David =

Elizabeth David CBE ( born Elizabeth Gwynne ; 26 December 1913 ? 22 May 1992 ) was a British cookery writer who , in the mid @-@ 20th century , strongly influenced the revitalisation of the art of home cookery with articles and books about European cuisines and traditional British dishes .

Born to an upper @-@ class family , David rebelled against social norms of the day . She studied art in Paris , became an actress , and ran off with a married man with whom she sailed in a small boat to Italy , where their boat was confiscated . They were nearly trapped by the German invasion of Greece in 1940 but escaped to Egypt where they parted . She then worked for the British government , running a library in Cairo . While there she married , but the marriage was not long @-@ lived .

After the war , David returned to England , and , dismayed by the gloom and bad food , wrote a series of articles about Mediterranean food that caught the public imagination , and in 1950 A Book of Mediterranean Food . She boldly called for ingredients such as aubergines , basil , figs , garlic , olive oil and saffron , which at the time were scarcely available even in London . Within a few years , however , paella , moussaka , ratatouille , hummus and gazpacho became familiar dishes across Britain , both in restaurants and in home cooking .

Books on French and Italian cuisine followed , and within ten years David was a major influence on British cooking . She was deeply hostile to second @-@ rate cooking and to bogus substitutes for classic dishes and ingredients .

David opened a shop selling kitchen equipment in the 1960s . It continued to trade under her name after she left it in 1973 , but her reputation rests on her articles and her books , which have been constantly reprinted .

= = Life and career = =

= = = Early years = = =

David was born Elizabeth Gwynne , the second of four children , all daughters , of Rupert Sackville Gwynne and the Hon. Stella Ridley , daughter of the 1st Viscount Ridley . Both parents ' families had considerable fortunes , the Gwynnes from engineering and land speculation , and the Ridleys from coal mining . Through the two families , David was of English , Scottish and Welsh or Irish descent , and , through an ancestor on her father 's side , also Dutch and Sumatran . David and her sisters grew up in Wootton Manor in Sussex , a Jacobean manor house with extensive modern additions by Detmar Blow . Her father , who had a weak heart , nevertheless insisted on pursuing a demanding political career , becoming Conservative MP for Eastbourne , and a junior minister in Andrew Bonar Law 's government . Overwork , combined with his vigorous recreational pastimes , chiefly racing , riding and adultery , brought about his death in 1924 , aged 51 . Elizabeth and her sisters Priscilla , Diana and Felicité , who had little affection from their widowed mother , were sent away to boarding schools .

As a teenager , David enjoyed painting , and her mother thought her talent worth developing . She was sent to Paris in 1930 , enrolling at the Sorbonne for a course in French civilisation which covered history , literature and architecture . She lodged with a Parisian family , whose fanatical devotion to the pleasures of the table she portrayed to comic effect in her French Provincial Cooking ( 1960 ) . Nevertheless , she acknowledged in retrospect that the experience had been the most valuable part of her time in Paris : " I realized in what way the family had fulfilled their task of instilling French culture into at least one of their British charges . Forgotten were the Sorbonne professors . ? What had stuck was the taste for a kind of food quite ideally unlike anything I had known before . " Stella Gwynne was not eager for her daughter 's early return to England , after qualifying for her Sorbonne diploma , and sent her from Paris to Munich in 1931 to study German .

Back in England , David unenthusiastically went through the social rituals for upper @-@ class young women of presentation at court as a débutante and the associated dances . The respectable

young Englishmen she met at the latter did not appeal to her . She decided that she was not good enough as a painter , and to her mother 's displeasure chose instead to become an actress . She joined the Oxford Repertory Company in 1933 , and moved to the Open Air Theatre in Regent 's Park , London the following year . Among her colleagues in the Regent 's Park company was an actor nine years her senior , Charles Gibson @-@ Cowan . His disregard for social conventions appealed strongly to her , and she also found him sexually irresistible . His being married did not daunt either of them .

David rented rooms in a large house near the park , spent a generous 21st birthday present on equipping the kitchen , and learned to cook . A gift from her mother of *The Gentle Art of Cookery* by Hilda Lyle was her first cookery book . She later wrote , " I wonder if I would have ever learned to cook at all if I had been given a routine Mrs Beeton to learn from , instead of the romantic Mrs Lyle with her rather wild , imagination @-@ catching recipes . "

= = = France , Greece , Egypt and India = = =

Recognising that she was not going to be a success on the stage , David worked for a while as a junior assistant at the fashion House of Worth , but she found the subservience of retail work irksome . She left in early 1938 , and she and Gibson @-@ Cowan bought a boat , just big enough to suffice , with the intention of sailing it to Greece . They crossed the Channel in July 1939 and navigated the boat through the canal system of France . They halted at Marseille and then , for more than six months , at Antibes , where David met and became greatly influenced by the ageing writer Norman Douglas , about whom she later wrote extensively . He inspired her love of the Mediterranean , encouraged her interest in good food , and taught her to " search out the best , insist on it , and reject all that was bogus and second @-@ rate . " David and Gibson @-@ Cowan finally left Antibes in May 1940 , sailing to Corsica and then to Sicily , where they were suspected of spying and were interned . After 19 days in custody in various parts of Italy , they were allowed to cross into Yugoslavia . They had lost almost everything they possessed ? the boat , money , manuscripts , notebooks and David 's cherished collection of recipes . With the help of the British Consul in Zagreb they got to Athens in July 1940 . By this time , David was no longer in love with her partner , but remained with him from necessity . Gibson @-@ Cowan got a job teaching English on the island of Syros , where David learnt to cook with the fresh ingredients available locally . When the Germans invaded Greece in April 1941 , the couple managed to leave on a civilian convoy to Egypt .

Able to speak excellent French and good German , David secured a job in the naval cipher office in Alexandria . She was quickly rescued from her temporary refugee accommodation , having met an old English friend who had an " absurdly grandiose " flat in the city and invited her to keep house for him . She and Gibson @-@ Cowan amicably went their separate ways , and she moved into the grand flat . She engaged a cook , Kyriacou , a Greek refugee , whose eccentricities ( sketched in a chapter of *Is There a Nutmeg in the House ?* ) did not prevent him from producing magnificent food : " The flavour of that octopus stew , the rich wine dark sauce and the aroma of mountain herbs was something not easily forgotten . " In 1942 she caught an infection that affected her feet . She spent some weeks in hospital and felt obliged to give up her job in the cypher office . David then moved to Cairo , where she was asked to set up and run the Ministry of Information 's reference library . The library was open to everyone and was much in demand by journalists and other writers . Her circle of friends in this period included Alan Moorehead , Freya Stark , Bernard Spencer , Patrick Kinross , Olivia Manning and Lawrence Durrell . At her tiny flat in the city , she employed Suleiman , a Sudanese suffragi ( a cook @-@ housekeeper ) . She recalled :

Suleiman performed minor miracles with two Primus stoves and an oven which was little more than a tin box perched on top of them . His soufflés were never less than successful . ? For three or four years I lived mainly on rather rough but highly flavoured colourful shining vegetable dishes , lentil or fresh tomato soups , delicious spiced pilaffs , lamb kebabs grilled over charcoal , salads with cool mint @-@ flavoured yoghurt dressings , the Egyptian fellahin dish of black beans with olive oil and lemon and hard @-@ boiled eggs ? these things were not only attractive but also cheap .

In her years in Cairo , David had a number of affairs . She enjoyed them for what they were , but with one exception she did not fall in love . Several of her young men , however , fell in love with her ; one of them was Lieutenant @-@ Colonel Tony David . By now in her thirties , David weighed the advantages and disadvantages of remaining a spinster until such time as the ideal husband might appear , and with considerable misgivings she finally accepted Tony David 's proposal of marriage .

Elizabeth Gwynne married Tony David in Cairo on 30 August 1944 . Within a year , her husband was posted to India . She followed him there in January 1946 , but she found life as the wife of an officer of the British Raj tedious , the social life dull , and the food generally " frustrating " . In June 1946 , she suffered severe sinusitis and was told by her doctors that the condition would persist if she remained in the summer heat of Delhi . Instead she was advised to go back to England . She did so ; her biographer Artemis Cooper observes , " She had been away from England for six years , and in that time she , and England , had changed beyond recognition . "

= = = Post @-@ war England = = =

Returning after her years of Mediterranean warmth and access to a profusion of fresh ingredients , David found her native country in the post @-@ war period grey and daunting . She encountered terrible food : " There was flour and water soup seasoned solely with pepper ; bread and gristle rissoles ; dehydrated onions and carrots ; corned beef toad in the hole . I need not go on . " She met an old flame in London , and their affair was rekindled , but when Colonel David returned from India in 1947 , she immediately resumed the role of wife , and they set up home in Chelsea , which was to remain her home for the rest of her life . Tony David proved ineffectual in civilian life , unable to find a suitable job , and ran up debts .

Partly to earn some money , and partly from an " agonized craving for the sun " , David began writing articles on Mediterranean cookery . Her first efforts were published in 1949 in the British magazine Harper 's Bazaar . From the outset , David refused to sell the copyright of her articles , and so she was able to collect and edit them for publication in book form . Even before all the articles had been published , she had assembled them into a typescript volume called A Book of Mediterranean Food and submitted it to a series of publishers , all of whom turned it down . One of them explained that a collection of unconnected recipes needed linking text . David took this advice , but conscious of her inexperience as a writer she kept her own prose short and quoted extensively from established authors whose views on the Mediterranean might carry more weight . In the published volume , the sections are linked by substantial extracts from works by writers including Norman Douglas , Lawrence Durrell , Gertrude Stein , D. H. Lawrence , Osbert Sitwell , Compton Mackenzie , Arnold Bennett , Henry James and Théophile Gautier . She submitted the revised typescript to John Lehmann , a publisher more associated with poetry than cookery , but he accepted it , agreeing to an advance payment of £ 100 . A Book of Mediterranean Food was published in 1950 .

David placed great importance on the illustration of books , and writers including Cyril Ray and John Arlott commented that the drawings by John Minton added to the attractions of the book . David herself was less convinced by Minton 's black and white drawings , but described his jacket design as " stunning " . She was especially taken with " his beautiful Mediterranean bay , his tables spread with white cloths and bright fruit " and the way that " pitchers and jugs and bottles of wine could be seen far down the street . " Finding the book selling rapidly , Lehmann commissioned David to write , and Minton to illustrate , a sequel . This was French Country Cooking . David gave Minton detailed instructions about some of his drawings , and was more pleased with them in this volume . David dedicated the book to her mother , despite their difficult relationship .

With the earnings from articles commissioned by magazine editors in the wake of the success of the first book , and the advance on the second book , David was able to tour France before completing the manuscript . This was her last holiday with her husband and was not wholly successful . Once French Country Cooking was finished , David decided to live in France for a time , leaving her husband in London . She spent a cold spring and a warm summer in Provence , from which her fourth book , Summer Cooking was partly drawn . Work on that book was postponed , as

David had agreed with Lehmann that her next work should be about Italian food .

= = = Italian , French and other cuisines = = =

Since the brief and unpleasant time there with Charles Gibson @-@ Cowan in 1940 , David had been in Italy only once , to visit Norman Douglas in Capri in 1951 . She returned to Italy in March 1952 and spent nearly a year travelling around the country collecting material . By the time she completed the book , Lehmann 's publishing firm had been closed down by its parent company , and David found herself under contract to Macdonald , another imprint within the same group . She intensely disliked the company and wrote a most unflattering portrait of it in a 1985 article .

Italian Food , with illustrations by Renato Guttuso , was published in 1954 . At the time , many of the ingredients used in the recipes were practically unavailable in Britain . Looking back in 1963 , David wrote , " In Soho but almost nowhere else , such things as Italian pasta , and Parmesan cheese , olive oil , salame , and occasionally Parma ham were to be had . With southern vegetables such as aubergines , red and green peppers , fennel , the tiny marrows called by the French courgettes and in Italy zucchini , much the same situation prevailed . " David was less en rapport with Italy than with Greece and southern France , and found preparing and writing her Italian Food ( 1954 ) " uncommonly troublesome " . The effort she put into the book was recognised by reviewers . The Times Literary Supplement wrote , " More than a collection of recipes , this book is in effect a readable and discerning dissertation on Italian food and regional dishes , and their preparation in the English kitchen . " The Observer remarked , " Mrs. David ? may be counted among the benefactors of humanity . " In The Sunday Times , Evelyn Waugh named Italian Food as one of the two books that had given him the most pleasure in that year .

For Summer Cooking , published in 1955 , David left Macdonald and signed with the publisher Museum Press . This book , her fourth , reflected her strong belief in eating food in season ; she loved " the pleasure of rediscovering each season 's vegetables " and thought it " rather dull to eat the same food all year round . " Unconstrained by the geographical agendas of her first three books , David wrote about dishes from Britain , India , Mauritius , Russia , Spain and Turkey , as well as France , Italy and Greece . Soon after the publication of this book , David was wooed away from her regular column in Harper 's by Vogue magazine , which offered her more money and more prominence .

With her increased income from Vogue and The Sunday Times , to which she also contributed regularly , David was able to visit many different areas of France . On these trips she completed her research on the book for which , according to Artemis Cooper in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography , she would be best remembered : French Provincial Cooking ( 1960 ) . The book was dedicated to " P.H , with love " . The initials concealed the name of Peter Higgins , with whom David had an affair that lasted throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s . Tony David was by now out of her life and had lived in Spain from 1953 ; they divorced in 1960 . Reviews of the new book were as complimentary as those for its predecessors . The Times Literary Supplement wrote , " French Provincial Cooking needs to be read rather than referred to quickly . It discourses at some length the type and origin of the dishes popular in various French regions , as well as the culinary terms , herbs and kitchen equipment used in France . But those who can give the extra time to this book will be well repaid by dishes such as La Bourride de Charles Bérôt and Cassoulet Colombié . " The Observer said that it was difficult to think of any home that could do without the book and called David " a very special kind of genius " .

= = = 1960s = = =

In 1960 , David stopped writing for The Sunday Times , where she was unhappy about editorial interference with her copy , and joined the weekly publication The Spectator . Cooper writes , " Her professional career was at its height . She was hailed not only as Britain 's foremost writer on food and cookery , but as the woman who had transformed the eating habits of middle @-@ class England . " Her books were now reaching a wide public , having been reprinted in paperback by the

mass @-@ market Penguin Books . Her private life was less felicitous . She was greatly distressed at the ending of her affair with Higgins , who fell in love with a younger woman , and for a period she drank too much brandy and resorted too often to sleeping pills . Probably as a result of these factors , and overwork , in 1963 , when she was 49 , David suffered a cerebral haemorrhage . She recovered , but her sense of taste was temporarily affected , and her confidence was badly shaken .

Together with four business partners , David opened a shop selling kitchen equipment . The partners were spurred on by the recent success of Terence Conran 's Habitat shops , which sold among much else imported kitchen equipment for which there was evidently a market . Elizabeth David Ltd opened at 46 Bourne Street , Pimlico , in November 1965 .

David was uncompromising in her choice of merchandise ; despite its large range of kitchen implements , the shop famously did not stock garlic presses . David wrote an article called " Garlic Presses are Utterly Useless " , refused to sell them , and advised customers who demanded them to go elsewhere . Not available elsewhere , by contrast , were booklets by David printed specially for the shop . Some of them were later incorporated into the collections of her essays and articles , *An Omelette and a Glass of Wine* and *Is There a Nutmeg in the House ?* .

David continued to write articles for magazines . She still included many recipes but increasingly wrote about places ? markets , auberges , farms ? and people , including profiles of famous chefs and gourmets such as Marcel Boulestin and Edouard de Pomiane . In her later articles , she expressed strongly @-@ held views on a wide range of subjects ; she abominated the word " crispy " , demanding to know what it conveyed that " crisp " did not ; she confessed to an inability to refill anybody 's wineglass until it was empty ; she insisted on the traditional form " Welsh rabbit " rather than the modern invention " Welsh rarebit " ; she poured scorn on the Guide Michelin 's standards ; she deplored " fussy garnish ... distract [ ing ] from the main flavours " ; she inveighed against the ersatz : " anyone depraved enough to invent a dish consisting of a wedge of steam @-@ heated bread spread with tomato paste and a piece of synthetic Cheddar can call it a pizza . "

= = = Later years = = =

While running the shop , David wrote another full @-@ length book , *Spices , Salt and Aromatics in the English Kitchen* ( 1970 ) , the first of a projected series on English cookery . The shop was never profitable , but David would not lower her standards in search of a commercial return . Gradually her partners found her approach unsustainable , and in 1973 she left the business . To her annoyance , the shop continued to trade under her name , as it was legally entitled to do .

In 1977 David was badly injured in a car accident , from which she took a long time to recover . While she was in hospital , the last book that she completed unaided , *English Bread and Yeast Cookery* ( 1977 ) , was published . Its scholarship won high praise , and *The Times Literary Supplement* suggested that a copy of the book should be given to every marrying couple . When she recovered from the accident , David pressed on with her researches for her next project , *Harvest of the Cold Months : the Social History of Ice and Ices* . While the elements of this work were being slowly assembled , David published a book of her favourites of her essays and press articles , *An Omelette and a Glass of Wine* ( 1984 ) . This book was compiled with the help of Jill Norman , who became her literary executor and edited further David works after the author 's death .

In the 1980s , David made several visits to California , which she much enjoyed , but her health began to fail . She suffered a succession of falls which resulted in several spells in hospital . The death in 1986 of her younger sister Felicité , who had lived in the top floor of her house for thirty years , was a severe blow to David . In May 1992 she suffered a stroke , followed two days later by another , which was fatal . She died at her Chelsea home on 22 May 1992 , aged 78 , and was buried on 28 May at the family church of St Peter 's , Folkington .

= = Awards and legacy = =

David won the Glenfiddich Writer of the Year award for English Bread and Yeast Cookery . She was also awarded honorary doctorates by the Universities of Essex and Bristol , and the award of a Chevalier de l 'Ordre du Mérite Agricole . However , the honour that most pleased her was being made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1982 in recognition of her skills as a writer . In 1976 she was awarded an OBE . In 1986 she was awarded a CBE .

David has appeared in fictional form at least twice . In 2000 a novel , Lunch with Elizabeth David , by Roger Williams was published by Carroll & Graf , and in 2006 , the BBC broadcast Elizabeth David : A Life in Recipes , a film starring Catherine McCormack as Elizabeth David and Greg Wise as Peter Higgins . David 's papers are at the Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study , Harvard University .

In 2012 , to mark the Diamond Jubilee of Elizabeth II , David was chosen by BBC Radio 4 as one of the 60 Britons who have been most influential during the 60 years of the Queen 's reign . In 2013 her portrait was one of a series of first @-@ class stamps issued to celebrate the centenary of ten " Great Britons " . In 2016 an English Heritage blue plaque was erected on her former home at 24 Halsey Street , Chelsea , where she had lived for 45 years : she was the first food writer to receive this form of recognition . The writer Auberon Waugh wrote that if asked to name the woman who had brought about the greatest improvement in English life in the 20th century , " my vote would go to Elizabeth David . " David 's biographer Artemis Cooper concludes her Oxford Dictionary of National Biography article thus :

David was the best writer on food and drink this country has ever produced . When she began writing in the 1950s , the British scarcely noticed what was on their plates at all , which was perhaps just as well . Her books and articles persuaded her readers that food was one of life 's great pleasures , and that cooking should not be a drudgery but an exciting and creative act . In doing so she inspired a whole generation not only to cook , but to think about food in an entirely different way .

#### = = Books = =

1950 : A Book of Mediterranean Food , decorated by John Minton . London : John Lehmann OCLC 1363273

1951 : French Country Cooking , decorated by John Minton . London : John Lehmann OCLC 38915667

1954 : Italian Food , illustrated by Renato Guttuso . London : Macdonald OCLC 38915667

1955 : Summer Cooking , illustrated by Adrian Daintrey . London : Museum Press OCLC 6439374

1960 : French Provincial Cooking , illustrated by Juliet Renny . London : Michael Joseph OCLC 559285062

1970 : Spices , Salt and Aromatics in the English Kitchen . Harmondsworth : Penguin ISBN 0 @-@ 14 @-@ 046163 @-@ 9

1977 : English Bread and Yeast Cookery , with illustrations by Wendy Jones . Harmondsworth : Penguin ISBN 0 @-@ 14 @-@ 046299 @-@ 6

1984 : An Omelette and a Glass of Wine . Jill Norman ( ed . ) London : Robert Hale ISBN 0 @-@ 7090 @-@ 2047 @-@ 3 ( selection of previously published articles )

#### = = = Posthumous publications = = =

1994 : Harvest of the Cold Months : the social history of ice and ices . London : Michael Joseph ISBN 0 @-@ 7181 @-@ 3703 @-@ 5

1997 : South Wind Through the Kitchen : the best of Elizabeth David . Jill Norman ( ed . ) London : Michael Joseph ISBN 0 @-@ 7181 @-@ 4168 @-@ 7

2000 : Is There a Nutmeg in the House ? ; Jill Norman ( ed . ) London : Michael Joseph ISBN 0 @-@ 7181 @-@ 3703 @-@ 5

2003 : Elizabeth David 's Christmas ; Jill Norman ( ed . ) London : Michael Joseph ISBN 0 @-@ 7181 @-@ 4670 @-@ 0

2010 : At Elizabeth David 's Table : her very best everyday recipes . Jill Norman ( ed . ) Foreword  
by Jamie Oliver , Johnny Grey , Rose Gray , Sally Clarke , Simon Hopkinson , Hugh Fearnley @-@  
Whittingstall . London : Michael Joseph ISBN 978 @-@ 0 @-@ 7181 @-@ 5475 @-@ 2