

THE BOAT COOKBOOK – Fiona Sims. Published in soft covers by Adlard Coles Nautical [www.adlardcoles.com] at £16.99. 160 187mm x 559mm pages, in full colour throughout. ISBN 978-1-4081-9200-9. Also available for Kindle

Mealtimes on any long cruise, especially an ocean passage, take on an importance which is rarely matched at home where work, chores or other activities keep you busy, so a yacht's library is almost certain to contain several recipe books. Going through them on night watch, trying to get inspiration for the next day's lunch or dinner, is a useful way to pass the time. But depending on the size of your boat, what stores you have, and how 'high tech' you are – fridge? freezer? neither? – complicated recipes requiring recently-bought ingredients are often challenging or impossible. Fiona Sims makes it clear from the beginning that she's a weekend sailor, with access to supermarkets and fresh ingredients, but she does cook on a 29ft Westerly with a modest galley. (I'm glad to see that she's a fan of pressure-cookers – mine is still in almost daily use, ten years after coming ashore from extensive ocean cruising).

Apart from the actual recipes, this book – subtitled 'Real food for hungry sailors' – is packed with interesting anecdotes and useful tips, with colourful illustrations and photos. Even if you lack the necessary ingredients, the pictures of some quite exotic dishes should inspire you. Cruising yachties are masters of improvisation – it's amazing what you can do with a can of Spam.

The Boat Cookbook starts off with breakfast ideas and snack lunches (with instructions on how first to catch, kill, and fillet a mackerel, plus two pages of illustrated steps). Fiona likes to use plenty of herbs and spices, particularly sumac, which I hadn't come across before – it sounds interesting! – and chorizo, which does amazing things for the flavour of an otherwise rather boring bean stew. She is a big supporter of sustainable fishing, and includes plenty of vegetarian recipes. There are several delicious-sounding desserts using various fruits including peaches and cherries, and the Salted Caramel and Banana Crunch – see page 80 of this issue – is truly decadent!

The last third of The Boat Cookbook contains recipes mostly intended to be cooked or baked at home and taken on board, including a savoury pumpkin tart to keep the Brits happy – for non-Americans, sweet pumpkin pie takes some getting used to – a new slant on the ever-favourite flapjacks, a new brownie recipe, and a chocolate fruit cake. There's a section on booze (and ideas for making use of an empty wine-box bag) followed by a selection of mixed drinks, covered much more extensively in The Boat Drinks Book by the same author (see Flying Fish 2017/1). The anecdotes keep coming, on almost every page, from recommendations for 'great boating novels' to weather forecasting, seasickness remedies to nice places to anchor around the UK, so even if some of the recipes are impractical while you're at sea, The Boat Cookbook should entertain you nevertheless.

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