

# olive heroes

They'll always hold a place in our hearts - here are the latest additions to our gallery of greats

Words RHODRI MARSDEN



## RICK STEIN

Since we first saw Rick cooking on TV in the mid-eighties, reacting jovially to Keith Floyd completely forgetting his name, he's become Floyd's natural successor. Not by boozing to excess and swearing at his producer, of course, but merely by sharing his love of food in an idiosyncratic, slightly bumbling yet ultimately lovable way. Few chefs, for example, would do a blind taste test of turkeys to unfortunately find themselves picking the battery bird over the organic, and be happy for the embarrassing moment to be screened as part of his BBC Two *Food Heroes* series in 2002. This fantastic moment demonstrated a glorious lack of arrogance coupled with a supreme confidence that we'd still respect him regardless. And of course we do, because with 11 recipe books and several TV

series under his belt, Rick knows his onions, shallots and more besides.

Those who live near his restaurants, deli, patisserie and cooking school will all have felt the renowned Padstein effect, but his influence extends way beyond Cornwall: he's changed a nation's attitude towards fish. We'd all become a bit suspicious of anything that didn't come encased in batter, but Rick gently showed us that there was nothing to be afraid of. He got us excited about John Dory, gurnard and squid, consigned boil-in-the-bag cod to the freezer compartment of history, and for that - along with his amazing recipe for red mullet with parsley, garlic and spaghetti (see [tinyurl.com/2wtao](http://tinyurl.com/2wtao)) - we'll always be grateful. And we haven't even mentioned Chalky...



## BRINDISA

Historically, Brits have been perfectly happy to sample the Spanish climate, but nowhere near as keen on the food. As a result, tapas bars in holiday resorts catered to unadventurous appetites by offering safe bets such as bland tortillas and patatas bravas (as near to our beloved egg and chips as they were prepared to go). Many of those that sprung up back home delivered greasy garlic prawns and soggy croquetas, and gave sangria a bad rep. It took a fearless pioneer to properly introduce us to delicacies such as idiazábal cheese and jabugo ibérico ham as well as the world's best manzanilla olives: Monika Linton, and her mini-empire, Brindisa ([brindisa.com](http://brindisa.com)).

The business started humbly with a pallet of Rioja and a box of Spanish cheese but grew into the

foremost British importer of Spanish food, with a fantastic store in Borough Market selling everything from delicate Ortiz tuna to orange blossom honey. But above all, Brindisa sparked our passion for chorizo, and now we're using it in salads, stews and sauces, as well as snacking on it while making dinner with a cold glass of sherry to hand.

Brindisa's London restaurants - Tapas, Tierra and Casa Brindisa - have added three more strings to the Brindisa bow, and the innovative pairings on their menus (pork belly with pear purée, creamed white chocolate on toast) may be pricy, but are they worth it? Si.

The word Brindisa comes from the Spanish brindis, meaning to raise your glass; **olive** suggests you pour yourself a fino and join us in doing just that.

**SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION** Rick Stein is the uncle of BBC Radio 1 DJ **Judge Jules**, who has been a life-long supporter of **Arsenal FC**, which provided the basis of Nick Hornby's book **Fever Pitch**, which was made into a film starring **Colin Firth**, who played lawyer Mark Darcy in the film **Bridget Jones's Diary**, which contained a scene featuring Bridget trudging through **Borough Market**, where the longest queue by far each weekend is for the legendary barbecued chorizo roll made by Brindisa.



**RICK STEIN'S FAR EASTERN ODYSSEY** WILL BE ON BBC TWO LATER IN THE YEAR. FOR DETAILS, SEE [BBC.CO.UK/FOOD](http://BBC.CO.UK/FOOD)