



BOOK
73

the food vibes of
Eric Ivanidis and Marcelo Ballardin

Lannoo

**WE EAGERLY TAKE IN EVERYTHING LIFE
HAS TO OFFER. THAT'S WHY WE SELDOM
SAY NO TO INTERESTING OPPORTUNITIES
THAT COME OUR WAY.**

DOOR
73





The world revealed itself to me when I stepped onto a plane headed for the Netherlands. I was leaving with my wife Eleni for Cadzand, where Pure C, headed up by master chef Sergio Herman, had recently opened its doors. I felt irrevocably drawn to the restaurant and its dynamic surroundings, as if I instinctively felt I had to be there. Eleni became my tower of strength as she followed me and supported me in realising my big plan.

And then there was that first meeting with Marcelo, who became my trainee mentor and introduced me to local ingredients I had never even heard of. Our shared sense of humour and sunny, southern roots – Brazilian in his case, Greek in mine – led to an instant bond. And today, almost ten years after we left Pure C to establish his restaurant, OAK, in Ghent, he is still my guide – both personally and professionally.

Marcelo taught me to look ahead while keeping both feet firmly on the ground, no matter the situation. To stay rooted in my past. Greece is so much more than my country of birth; it is the place I draw my inspiration from. I am immensely grateful to my parents because they gave me all the freedom I needed and taught me the secrets of Greek cuisine with so much verve and flavour. On the one hand, this book is an ode to my mother, who, with her artisanal preparations of classics such as tarama, giouvetsi and moussaka, subconsciously drove me to become a family man and to pursue my career as a chef.

On the other hand, this book is a homage to the new family I have met here in Belgium. Marcelo, Dominik, their family, and the entire team at both OAK and DOOR73 took me in with warmth and love. Seeing how they maintain warm ties with my mother, sister, and cousins gives me great pleasure. The older I get, the more I feel it is important to share my life, vision and inspiration with my families. Especially when you have something valuable to pass on to others, as I do with my daughter. If I left tomorrow, DOOR73 should keep going. That's also the goal of this book.

I invite you, my guests and inquisitive readers, to embark on a journey of discovery guided by my personal story and 45 recipes, including 5 cocktails by Hannes Verniers. They tell part of the story of the life that I've led up until now and the experiences I've enjoyed. Finally, with DOOR73 and this book, I would like to bridge the different cultures, colours, and backgrounds that have inspired me thus far, each of which has contributed in its own way to the person I am today: a Greek, Flemish, Belgian cosmopolitan eager to explore the world.

Here's to plenty of cooking pleasure and culinary inspiration!

I hope to see you soon in our restaurant,

Eric Ivanidis

I believe that the question of whether to open a second restaurant arises with everyone after a successful first venture. And, to be perfectly honest with you, if it hadn't been for Eric, I probably never would have taken on this challenge. So, how did I make this decision?

It all comes down to our friendship. Eric has been an integral part of our business since OAK was established. Together with Dominik, he played a crucial role in OAK's development – from following up on recruitment to his pioneering work experimenting with private dining experiences. Eric stood by my side long before I had the privilege of welcoming our first guests at OAK.

He has been my faithful companion for over a decade. It has always been my goal to support him as much as possible. By the time the opportunity to open a second restaurant presented itself, Eric was thoroughly fed up with working beside me as a sous chef at OAK. It won't surprise you to know that conflicts arose more and more frequently in our kitchen. Nick Polak can testify to our epic discussions, which sometimes resembled fights more than anything else, as if an elder brother had taken up the gauntlet against his younger sibling.

I'm sharing these intimate details to highlight how my relationship with Eric is much more than just a superficial bond. We are more intimately connected than most other fellow chefs. I know his family, and he knows mine. I've been closely involved with his professional development, and I'm convinced beyond any doubt that he and his team currently embody the best culinary concept this country has to offer.

With DOOR73, Eric has succeeded in creating his own identity, and it fills me with pride to see how I've been able to contribute to this evolution. But his biggest achievement so far is becoming a father. So, I feel incredibly privileged to be a godfather to his daughter, Athina.

I share these personal stories to give you a glimpse into my unique bond with Eric, a relationship that goes much deeper than you would initially suspect. Enjoy this book and our chemistry,

Marcelo Ballardín






ΕΞΑΝΤΑΣ
ΠΟΛΥΧΩΡΟΣ ΤΕΧΝΗΣ
EXANTAS ARTSPACE



VILLA
VENEZIA

ROOMS FOR
...
TV, air conditioning

WHISKY SOUR

The Whisky Sour is one of Marcelo's favourite aperitifs and is therefore a must at DOOR73. A classic that we freshened up with a tangy, velvety foam layer to offset the powerful whisky flavour.

5 cl strong whisky, very lightly
peated
2 cl vanilla syrup
2 cl lemon juice
3 drops Angostura bitters
lemon foam

Vanilla syrup
500 ml water
500 g sugar
1 vanilla bean

Sugar syrup
500 ml water
500 g sugar

Lemon foam (for 4 cocktails)
200 ml lemon juice
120 ml sugar syrup
3 g aquafaba

Garnish
Lemon zest

METHOD

For the vanilla syrup:

Put a pan over the heat and bring the water and sugar to a boil. Add a cut-open vanilla bean to the liquid.

For the sugar syrup:

Put a pan over the heat and bring the water and sugar to a boil.

For the lemon foam:

Combine the lemon foam ingredients and beat to a thick foam.



Combine the whisky, vanilla syrup, lemon juice and 3 drops of Angostura bitters in a glass filled with ice.

Stir with a bar spoon to cool and dilute the drink.

Garnish the cocktail with a spoonful of the frothy lemon foam and a strip of lemon zest.



CHICKEN WINGS WITH BARBECUE SAUCE AND AIOLI

 Preparation time: 35 minutes  Serves 4

At Syrco Bakker's Food Fest in Cadzand, Marcelo and I served the ultimate festival snack: chicken wings. I have fine-tuned the recipe for my barbecue sauce just for this book.

500 g chicken wings	100 g brown sugar	Aioli
5 g salt	30 g treacle	50 g garlic confit
50 ml olive oil	25 ml Worcestershire sauce	100 g egg yolk
1 g chilli powder	20 g tomato paste	9 ml Chardonnay vinegar
10 g smoked paprika powder	10 g salt	1 g fresh garlic
40 g tortilla chips	5 g celery seeds	60 ml water
100 ml barbecue sauce	5 g garlic powder	700 ml maize oil
60 g aioli	5 g cumin	
	5 g black pepper	
Barbecue sauce	2 g onion powder	
140 ml tomato ketchup	2 g smoked paprika powder	
120 ml apple cider		
120 ml soy sauce	0.5 g cayenne pepper	

METHOD

For the barbecue sauce:

Whisk all the ingredients together in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring regularly so the sugar dissolves nicely and the sauce doesn't burn. Simmer for 15 mins. Remove the pan from the heat as soon as the sauce has reduced to the right consistency and cover. Let the sauce cool to room temperature; this should take about 30 minutes. Transfer the sauce to an airtight container. You can store this sauce in the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks.

For the aioli:

Combine all the ingredients except for the oil. Slowly add the oil until you obtain a creamy mayonnaise.

For the chicken wings:

Marinate the chicken wings in a bowl containing the salt, the olive oil, the chilli powder and the smoked paprika powder for 30 minutes. Place the marinated chicken wings on a tray and cover with aluminium foil. Bake the wings for 20 mins. in an oven preheated to 180 °C. Remove the chicken wings from the oven and baste them in the sauce. Return them to the oven for another 3 to 4 minutes — raise the temperature to 200 °C this time, allowing the chicken wings to caramelize. Garnish with the tortilla chips and serve the aioli on the side as a dipping sauce.



RICOTTA WITH DRIED DATE TOMATOES AND CAPER



Preparation time: 6 hours



Serves 4

Few people realise that caper leaves — after they have been salted and pickled in a specific way — are actually edible. Greece is home to several farms that specialise in this time-honoured tradition. I use ricotta, which gives this recipe an Italian touch, but feel free to experiment with feta, burrata... What is essential to this dish are the sweet and sour date tomatoes that burst with flavour when in season.

200 g dried date
tomatoes

60 g ricotta

10 ml olive oil

1 g oregano

20 g feta

15 g croutons

8 to 10 caper leaves

20 ml spring onion oil

1 g lemon zest

40 ml tomato juice
dressing

Spring onion oil

100 g spring onions

300 ml maize oil

Tomato juice dressing

2 tomatoes

10 ml white balsamic

vinegar

20 ml olive oil

1 g salt

Croutons

1 slice sourdough bread

50 ml olive oil

1 g garlic

1 g pepper

2 g salt

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 60 °C. Bring a medium-sized pot filled with water to the boil. Blanch the tomatoes for 6 seconds in the boiling water. Then submerge them in a bowl of iced water. Peel off the skins. Dry the tomatoes for 4 to 6 hours in the oven. Meanwhile, puree the ricotta together with the olive oil and the oregano.

For the spring onion oil:

Use a stick blender to blend the onions with the oil. Heat the mixture in a saucepan before straining the mixture through a sieve.

For the tomato juice dressing:

Blend two fresh tomatoes and press them through a fine mesh sieve to collect the juice. Add vinegar, olive oil and salt to taste to the tomato juice.

For the croutons:

Preheat the oven to 180 °C. Dice a slice of sourdough bread into small cubes (aim for about 15 grams' worth of croutons). Add olive oil, garlic, pepper and salt and bake for 6 to 8 minutes in the oven until the croutons are nice and crispy.

Use a cooking ring to compose your plate.

Start with a layer of ricotta, then add the croutons, the caper leaves, the spring onion oil and the dried date tomatoes. Finish with salt, pepper, lemon zest and the tomato juice dressing.





BROTHERS IN CRIME

M When I met Eric at Pure C, I thought he looked like a caveman. He was very crude and macho in his ways. And yet, we soon developed a bond. Perhaps because we were the only 'foreigners' in the kitchen and he always needed a ride home, as we shared a house in the neighbourhood. I oversaw the cold kitchen, where he worked as a trainee. Chef Syrco Bakker called Eric Tiki – a shortened version of tzatziki – and I was referred to as Ronaldo, after the famous footballer. The atmosphere was informal, with plenty of room for horsing around but sufficiently serious for when we needed to get down to business. This balance was critical; our team of eight chefs provided meals for a thousand guests each week. One of my most memorable moments was when Eric was offered a permanent contract at the restaurant – as if I instinctively felt fate had brought us together.

E The first time I felt homesick was three months into my traineeship at Pure C. When I told Marcelo that I wanted to leave, he stopped me. Maybe he was afraid that my work would then land on his shoulders. Syrco also did his best to make me stay. Eleni was taken on board to provide breakfast for the hotel guests and help out with the service at Pure C. When I saw how much everyone was enjoying themselves, I decided to stay. When I look back upon those times, I think our period there was instrumental in determining the course our lives would take. Marcelo and I can take rough handling, so to speak. The Dutch are incredibly direct and just a bit crazy, something we found out at the best and worst of times.

Everyone belongs to the world

E Our shared sense of humour and sunny, southern roots – Brazilian in his case, Greek in mine – led to an instant bond. This doesn't mean that we were treated as outsiders by our colleagues, but we felt that shared bond very strongly. And because we both had a different country of birth, we very consciously and explicitly chose this region. Belgians are open to discovery. If they're not familiar with a certain ingredient or want to learn more about a specific sauce, dip, or dressing, they'll instantly start asking questions. Dining out has more than just a functional aspect: Belgians go out for dinner to celebrate. And that mindset is a gift from heaven for chefs. We are only a part of the bigger picture and contribute in our own small way to the identity of Ghent, Flanders, Belgium, and Europe. We are proud to be a part of that culinary community. I feel welcomed and supported here.

M Just like Eric, I am incredibly thankful for being able to start a business as a chef here in Belgium. Belgian restaurant goes breathe gastronomy. Belgium is – and I'm not exaggerating here – the best place in the world to own a restaurant. Belgians love dining out. Every day is a blessing when one is allowed to cook for such guests. At OAK, almost everyone orders the most extensive menu without batting an eyelid. That exuberant aspect of dining out and celebrating life together is part of their national character. During my travels, I feel as much like a Belgian as a cosmopolitan.



