

THE GOOD KITCHEN

LOVE AND CONNECTION THROUGH FOOD

by Danny McCubbin

Photography by Ros Atkinson

The Good Kitchen is a thriving example of the power of food to bring people together. Danny has united a community through cooking and I really salute him for that. Delve into his journey in this lovely book knowing that all the royalties will go right back to the heart of The Good Kitchen. Nice one Danny.

— Jamie Oliver

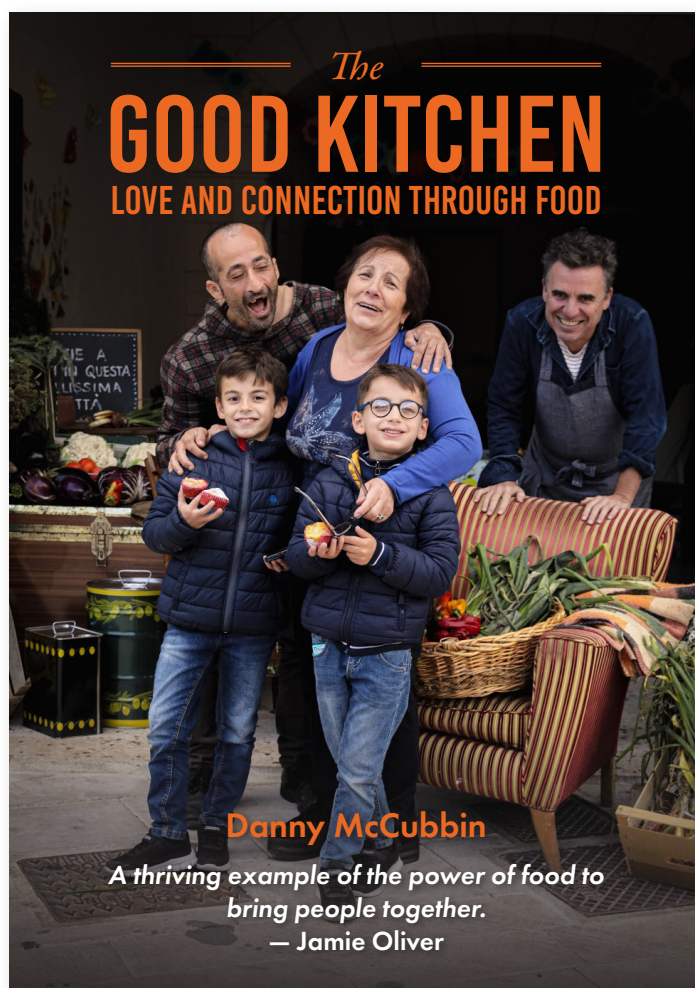
After twenty years of volunteering and working in food-focussed social enterprises, Danny McCubbin launched a community kitchen in a remote town in Sicily called Mussomeli. Every week Danny rescues surplus food from the supermarkets and then puts that food to good use cooking for vulnerable people of the town and delivering meals to the elderly who are alone.

Danny shares the pivotal moments of his journey, the life lessons, the human connections, and the food and recipes behind it all since opening the Kitchen's doors in July, 2021. Simplicity is at the heart of every meal, cooking with vegetarian surplus food of all kinds – proving that delicious meals can be prepared from the most inexpensive ingredients.

Danny provides recipes from The Good Kitchen that stay true to the rich Sicilian food tradition while being adaptable according to the ingredients available. He also shares various hints and tips on reducing food waste, which comes as second nature to most Sicilians. The book offers inspiration and advice for anyone who has dreamed of creating a grassroots project with social value.

The book features recipes from Danny's friends and supporters, including: Jamie Oliver, Stephanie Alexander, Anna Jones, Gennaro Contaldo, Fabrizia Lanza, and Ali Noor.

Part proceeds from the sale of this book will contribute to community kitchens.



The Author

Originally from Australia, Danny McCubbin had a successful seventeen-year career in London with chef and campaigner Jamie Oliver. He has spent years promoting food-focused social enterprises and helping diverse businesses create social value, with the belief that food has the power to transform lives.

During the pandemic in 2020, Danny set up two community kitchens in London. Mobilising his extensive network of chefs and home cooks, Danny provided cooked meals for thousands of vulnerable people who faced food insecurity.

His latest project, The Good Kitchen, also provides meals for many people by utilising surplus food and tapping in to a strong Sicilian culture of preservation, generosity, and community.

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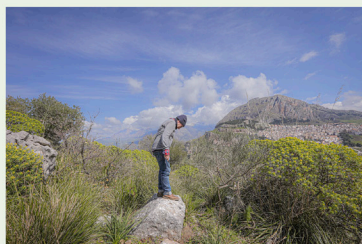
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sample spreads



INTRODUCTION

It has taken me a long time to write this book. Strange, I know, as the story has already been written – all I needed to do was to retell it. You would think that this was an easy task, but no, there was a part of me that was afraid my words alone would never be enough to convey this extraordinary tale. Putting all my worries aside, I just started to write, beginning at the beginning.

I am sitting here in The Good Kitchen, which is situated in the main town square in Mussomeli, a remote town in the middle of Sicily. It is lunch time, the glass doors are open and I am alone – a perfect time to write. If you ever arrive here at lunch time you would be forgiven for thinking that it was a public holiday or that the town was deserted. 'Don't worry,' I say to foreigners who come to the kitchen looking for food. 'It is just lunch time and for a Sicilian it is always more than "just" lunchtime.' Work stops, shops close and everyone heads home to eat and take an afternoon nap.

When I first arrived, my nine-to-five mindset was undeniable, but now I, too, take a long lunch break (except of course if I have a book to write). Stopping for a decent lunch is central to a Sicilian's way of life. Family and friends gather around the table to talk, refuelled and refreshed, and then they return to work at around 4.30pm. In so many ways this reminds me of family meal times back when I was a kid in Australia. The TV was never on during dinner, there were at least three courses of food and everyone at the table was encouraged to speak about their day.

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LEAVE
THE LEAVES
ON

CHAPTER 11

GENNARO'S PASTA CON LA ZUCCA

Serves 4 Approximately 40 minutes

3 tbsp olive oil
 2 garlic cloves; finely sliced
 ½ red chilli; finely chopped
 2 sprigs rosemary
 500 g pumpkin; peeled and cut into cubes
 About 200 ml hot vegetable stock
 1 tsp salt
 400 g Tripoline pasta (or other shapes like penne)
 Grated parmesan cheese to serve

Method

1. Heat olive oil in a frying pan over a medium heat. Sweat the garlic and chilli for a minute or so.
2. Stir in the pumpkin and rosemary and cook for 2 minutes. Increase the heat, add the stock, bring to the boil, then reduce the heat.
3. Partially cover with a lid and allow to simmer for about 15 minutes, until the pumpkin has softened.
4. While the pumpkin is simmering, place a large pot of salted water on the heat, bring to the boil and cook the Tripoline pasta until al dente. Check cooking times on your pasta packet.
5. Using tongs, lift the cooked Tripoline pasta and place in the pan with the pumpkin. Increase the heat and combine well with a bit of the hot water to loosen if necessary.
6. Remove from the heat and serve immediately with a good sprinkling of grated parmesan.

144 MAINS



145

CAPONATA

Serves 4-6 Approximately 1 hour

2-3 aubergines (about 1 kg); 2 cm-size cubes
 Vegetable oil for frying
 2 celery sticks; 3 mm slices
 1 onion; peeled and finely sliced
 3 tbsp olive oil
 80 g capers in salt; rinsed, soaked in water and drained
 80 g pitted olives; quartered
 2-3 tsp sugar
 35 ml (4 tbsp) red wine vinegar
 300 ml tomato passata
 15 g basil (half bunch) or flat-leaf parsley leaves; leaves roughly chopped and stalks finely chopped
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method

1. Heat a wide deep frying pan and add a glob of vegetable oil. Once the oil is hot, fry the aubergine in batches until golden and then drain on kitchen paper.
2. Blanch the celery in boiling water for 5 minutes, then drain into a colander.
3. Once all the aubergines are fried, gently heat the olive oil in the same pan and then fry the onion until soft and starting to colour.
4. Stir in the capers, olives, cooked celery and chopped basil or parsley stalks, then add the sugar, passata and vinegar. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper and bring to the boil.
5. Add the fried aubergine, reduce the heat and leave to simmer gently with a lid on for 20-30 minutes, or until the flavour has intensified and the sauce has reduced and thickened slightly. Check the sweet and sour of the dish and adjust with vinegar and sugar to taste.
6. Once the caponata has cooked and cooled, stir through the roughly chopped basil or flat-leaf parsley.
7. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Optional

Toasted slivered almonds or pine kernels added at the end with the herb is delicious.

118 MAINS



119

'Whenever I lose heart in the state of the world today, I look over at the sleepy village of Mussomeli and the incredible work Danny is doing there and my faith is restored. For as long as I have known him, Danny has answered an unstoppable calling to help others. Through his vital work, he has quietly become an integral part of so many people's lives over the years and now it's the turn of Mussomeli and their residents. Danny had a vision to provide cooked meals for vulnerable people that started with a one-euro house. But what has actually transpired and the impact this venture has had on the ground has blossomed into so much more than simply feeding people. This cookbook is a beautiful homage to this life-affirming journey, told through recipes, storytelling, life lessons and the people who have helped make The Good Kitchen what it is today.'

— Leyla Kazim

Travel and Food Presenter and Broadcaster
Presenter on BBC Radio 4's The Food Programme
MasterChef critic

'Sometimes you need new eyes to see the landscape, the town, the people and the food we grew up with. Sometimes you need a totally free spirit to show you the graciousness of love. Well this, to me and to the Anna Tasca Lanza cooking school, is Danny and his Good Kitchen.'

— Fabrizia Tasca Lanza

Director – Anna Tasca Lanza Cooking School

'I've known Danny for close to 20 years and in that time I have seen him give so much to community projects. He has the unique ability to connect people through food and in particular help young people who face many challenges in life. It's been a joy to watch him set up The Good Kitchen in Sicily. The book will inspire many people and help The Good Kitchen thrive.'

— Jimmy Doherty

'I love everything that Danny is doing at The Good Kitchen and I know that the book will inspire many people. I sometimes think he must be Italian because he understands how food is a way of life for us. I have seen how he brings people together through food for many years and I can't wait to try some of the recipes from The Good Kitchen.'

— Gennaro Contaldo

'Danny is not only a committed social activist who is transforming the community he lives in through the power of food, but he is a wonderful writer too. Danny is able to both write and speak powerfully from the heart, and it is this gift of story-telling which will make the book so special. In a world where authentic goodness is rare, Danny's writing about the community he lives and works in will be an inspiring bolster to us all.'

— Holly Rigby *Lecturer Narrative Non-Fiction Writing – City, University of London*