

Late Lunching

It's not even four o'clock and I've already burned the olives.

Here's one thing I know about myself. I am a brilliant host, but a mediocre cook. I can talk the pants off just about anyone, unless I'm trying to stir a pot at the same time. In that case, both my spag bol will be overcooked and my guests will be confused by incoherent conversation.

God only knows why I've agreed to entertain five people at home on a Sunday afternoon. I'm hosting drunch, which one would assume to be a dinner-lunch hybrid, though in actuality, the terminology results from the pairing of 'drunk' with 'lunch'.

In France the term "le drunch" has been prevalent in Parisian scenester circles for a couple of years. It made it into *urbandictionary.com* in 2008, but has garnered popularity in recent months after mustard company Maille used it as a promotional tool to increase condiment sales. Like ironic T-shirts, Chloë Sevigny and Spotify before it, le drunch is an exploitable hipster trend; a corporate attempt to sell something naff through social marketing to the Instagram-age cool kids.

Drunch is hosted on a Sunday around five o'clock, meaning even friends who go out until the wee hours will still attend in their hung-over state (for hair of the dog, obviously). Drunch is technically more guest-friendly than a standard weekend dinner party; diligent workers can depart around 9pm, so they still get eight hours in, avoiding a hellish Monday.

But let's go back to why I have burnt olives. I was up at 6am to buy these olives – the good Kalamatas sell out at the farmers' market by 8am. My Mediterranean roast chicken has only been in the oven for 30 minutes, but its olive-laden marinade is already turning a scary shade of charcoal (should it have been applied mid-roast? I don't know). As I ponder how I'll scrape off the black bits without my guests seeing, I open a bottle of pinot and stop caring quite so much.

We should get things straight: drunch isn't just an excuse to get lashed. It's less Sunday Session and more orphans family dinner; the kind of event one attends in lieu of having parents to go home to for a weekly hot meal. Whether it's a boozy tea complete with cucumber sandwiches (and cucumber martinis!) or a full-blown roast like I'm attempting, there are no rules to drunching. The idea centres around bringing friends together to prolong the weekend while eating, drinking, and generally being as merry as possible to numb any feelings of Mondayitis.

THE DRUNCH REPORT

French hipsters have invented a new kind of Sunday entertaining. Lee Suckling gives it a try.



Pre-prepared as a little entrée is Nigella's pea risotto, a dish I was fed days earlier by a friend and figured almost fail-safe. I've chosen a recipe from Ms Lawson because I've become all too aware (in my limited culinary experience) that the secret ingredient to anything that tasted good, ever, was butter. *Julie & Julia* taught me that much. The chicken roast, which will

now be served with more of an olive jus than a chunky sauce, should mean I can chatter away to my guests with limited attention paid to the oven. Pudding is store-bought: the bakery at New World does a stunning lemon meringue pie for \$10.99. When placed on a plate with a bit of French vanilla, nobody's the wiser.

The first two guests arrive a bit before five. I mix a warm pitcher of 'Winter' Pimm's in an attempt to loosen them up enough to stop caring about getting charred Kalamata in their teeth. The rest of the party is present by 5.15, and one guest has even bought homemade profiteroles (leading to a realisation that my supermarket number tastes more mass-produced than I think).

We've chowed down the risotto by six, because no one has eaten since breakfast. The roast was ready half an hour ago, and I've only just realised I've no clue how to carve a chook. I pretend to go to the loo, but instead I'm in there YouTubing 'how to carve a chicken' on my iPhone. I return, two minutes and 12 seconds later, pull off the legs, cut between the breast and thigh, then down the centre breastplate until I hit the cartilage; an uncomfortable action for someone who's never done this before. It becomes a bit of a massacred mess but I manage to get most of it onto a plate, discarding the burnt olives, and I pour the oily marinade into a little jug to create some semblance of gravy.

Come 7pm, I'm finally relaxed. My bit is done. My musical choice of Josephine Baker and Sidney Bechet entices *Midnight in Paris*-style conversation about the Lost Generation; apt considering this is an attempt at partaking in a French hipster pastime. The lemon meringue and profiteroles are devoured quickly and washed down with leftover champagne, which is a bit gauche after a meal, but it's a Sunday night – I'm not exactly going to drink leftover bubbles with my lunch on Monday.

At 9.15 taxis are being called for. One guest stays to help me load everything into the dishwasher and organise the Tupperware. I've completely missed the chance to do my week's ironing, neglected my Sunday night phone call to Mum and forgotten about gym playlist organisation for the coming week. But I do have time to watch last week's *Revenge* on demand as I fall asleep on the sofa by 11. Monday morning hurts more than usual, but I soldier on. Two lattes. Thank-you emails from my friends. Lunchtime rolls around, the hangover is gone, and I conceivably realise the most wondrous thing about hosting drunch: enough leftovers for an entire week. All I need now is a little jar of Dijon. ●