



Boxing clever

MANOR's food editor, *Anna Turns*, chats to **Giles Humphries** and **Myles Hopper** about their food philosophies and how the West Country inspired them to set up **Mindful Chef**, the healthy recipe box scheme.

When Giles Humphries and his best mate went fishing from Topsham in the summer of 2014, something really resonated when they saw the fish being sold on the quay afterwards to the locals, direct from the dayboat and as fresh as can be. "It dawned on us how locals source fish so differently in Devon to the mass model in which supermarkets work," says Giles. "We wanted to take that nationwide by applying that principle to the recipe box model, with some added health benefits." And so, the idea for Mindful Chef was born, with Giles and Myles Hopper at the helm.

The pair grew up in the West Country, playing sport together at Exeter School and going on surf trips to Polzeath, Harlyn Bay and Constantine Bay. Giles, 30, lived in Sidmouth, and Myles, 28, in Exeter, and their passion for this region's food and drink produce is

evident. In the first six months of business, they spent a long time meeting small, independent Westcountry producers, and in the early days the entire stock for Mindful Chef boxes came from Devon and Cornwall. The business evolved quickly, and since launching 18 months ago, Mindful Chef has delivered 250,000 meals nationwide, to customers as far flung as Penzance, Cardiff and Glasgow.

Now with an HQ in London, and a third co-founder, Rob Grieg-Gran, they've needed to cast their net wider and source ingredients from more independent producers and farms around the country: "We are trying to drill right down and remove all the big supply chains, so we go from plough to plate and farm to fork, keeping everything incredibly fresh," says Giles, who always has direct relationships with each supplier.

Myles and Giles still keep one foot in the West Country: "We source fish from Celtic Fish & Game



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The three co-founders of Mindful Chef: Myles, Rob and Giles

in St Ives, and organic veg from Langridge Farm near Crediton,” explains Giles, who chooses organic where possible. “If it’s not organic, it will always be free range, high welfare and conservation grade, because quality and ethics run through everything we do.”

Mindful Chef was created with the aim of making healthy eating easier for far more people, and the founders’ timing couldn’t have been better. Recipe box schemes are just on the cusp of a big boom in the UK – they are already massive business in the US – and their wellness ethos fits the current mood of the food industry. But these recipe boxes are by no means a fad diet, and there’s robust healthy-eating expertise behind every dish.

Myles, a personal trainer and nutritional coach, brings his own food philosophies to the table, plus he offers health coaching and meal planning. “Many of my clients would work out hard to get fit but find it tricky to keep on top of their nutrition,” he explains. “I’d always encourage them to stop eating refined foods and only indulge in things like bread and pasta occasionally, because they don’t give a nutritional high; they just create a blood sugar high.” Every colourful recipe is approved by a nutritionist, plus chef Louisa, who trained at Leigh Cookery School, spends her days testing recipes, making sure every dish can be made in less than 30 minutes. As a result, all the recipes are gluten-free and dairy-free, replacing refined carbohydrates with quinoa, wild rice, sweet potato and lots of vegetables.

“We’ve created a recipe box that is mindful in every way, by using healthy ingredients from small local

suppliers and by reducing food waste – as a business, we only order exactly what we need,” explains Giles. “We order from suppliers on a Thursday night, so the fishing boats go out on a Friday and land the fish by Friday night, so it’s sent to our depot and with customers on a Sunday.”

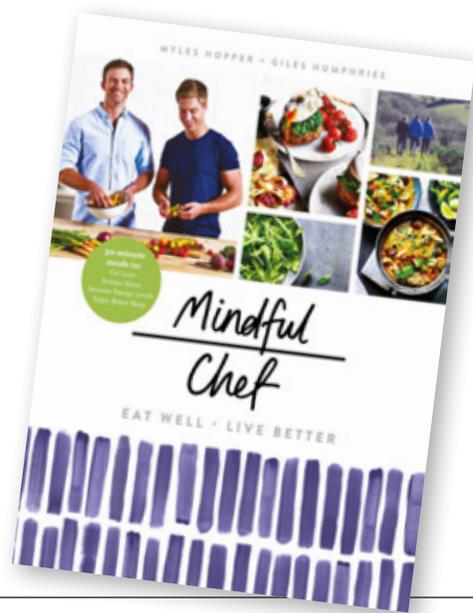
Giles, a marketeer, admits they’re not professional chefs, but this means he identifies well with his customers. Before launching this new venture, he was working late and his diet was suffering. “I had done a sports science degree and played competitive rugby, so I know what’s good for me, but with the modern lifestyle there wasn’t time to cook super-tasty, nutritional meals. I knew there must be a better way and that’s when we discovered the recipe box model that’s so popular in the States,” he explains. “We are average Joes when it comes to culinary skills, so Mindful Chef has taught us to have more confidence with cookery and encouraged us to experiment with new ingredients while expanding our repertoire.”

But he believes that cooking is not booming. “Cookery books may sell by the shelf-load, but in terms of getting down and dirty in the kitchen on a weekday evening, people just don’t do it, especially in cities. They use ready meals or delivery services.” So, boxes provide an achievable way of getting back in the kitchen while preparing food that’s going to make you feel good, plus they offer a chance to try new ingredients and recipes.

The founders’ no-nonsense approach is reflected in their new book, with recipes divided into five sections: energy and productivity, stress, gut health, exercise and

sleep. That said, Giles and Myles don't pretend to be saints. "We sell good, wholesome food, and we make sure that we fill you up, but it's not about excluding things... we still eat pizza and drink beer, but instead of having pasta six times a week, we suggest that you just have it twice a week and introduce a bit more raw food and diversity. Then you'll be less bloated, sleep better and have clearer skin – it's all down to the insulin metabolism and managing your energy levels." Ultimately, it is all about balance. **M**

mindfulchef.com



Spinach falafels with coconut harissa sauce and zingy kale salad

Serves two

INGREDIENTS

- 240g drained chickpeas
- 100g spinach
- 2 tbsp chickpea flour
- Olive oil
- 80g kale
- ½ pomegranate
- 1 avocado
- 20g walnuts
- 1½ tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 15g creamed coconut
- 2 tbsp boiling water
- 1 tsp harissa paste
- Sea salt and black pepper

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 200°C/gas mark 6.

Put the chickpeas into a bowl and mash for 1-2 minutes with a potato masher or the back of a fork, until they are all crushed.

Place the spinach in a separate bowl. Pour over enough boiling water to cover and leave to wilt for 1 minute. Place the spinach in a sieve and drain off the excess water, then finely chop.

Add the spinach to the chickpeas. Add the chickpea flour, one teaspoon of olive oil and one tablespoon of water, season generously and mix well. Form the chickpea mixture into 12 balls, place them on a baking tray, and bake in the oven for 15-20 minutes, turning them halfway through.

Meanwhile, make the kale salad. Finely slice the kale (removing any tough stalks). Cut the pomegranate in half and remove the seeds. Peel and de-stone the avocado and cut it into small pieces. Roughly chop the walnuts. Put the kale into a bowl and mix in the

apple cider vinegar and half a tablespoon of oil. Add the pomegranate seeds, avocado and walnuts and season with salt and pepper.

Dissolve the creamed coconut in the boiling water and mix with the harissa paste.

Serve the falafels on plates and drizzle over the coconut harissa sauce. Serve alongside the zingy kale salad.



Ginger and spring onion sea bass with miso and lime quinoa

Serves two

INGREDIENTS

- 80g quinoa
- 300ml boiling water
- 1 head of pak choi
- 1 yellow pepper
- 4cm fresh ginger
- 4 spring onions
- ½ fresh red chilli
- Coconut oil
- 2 x 150g sea bass fillets
- 2 tsp tamari
- 1 tbsp sweet miso paste
- Juice of ½ lime
- Sea salt and black pepper

METHOD

Rinse the quinoa and put into a saucepan with the boiling water. Simmer for 15-20 minutes, until cooked.

Meanwhile, cut the root end of the pak choi and thinly slice the yellow pepper. Peel the ginger and slice into thin matchsticks. Finely slice the spring onions and red chilli lengthways.

Heat half a tablespoon of oil in a frying pan on a medium heat. Add the pak choi and yellow pepper and cook for 5 minutes, until softened, then remove from the pan and keep warm.

Season the sea bass with sea salt and black pepper. Using the same frying pan, heat half a tablespoon of oil on a medium heat and place the sea bass in the pan, skin-side



down. Fry for 2-3 minutes each side, until cooked through. Remove from the pan.

Add one teaspoon of oil to the frying pan on a medium-high heat and add the ginger, chilli, spring onion and tamari. Cook for 3 minutes, until golden brown.

When the quinoa is cooked, drain, season and stir in the miso paste and lime juice.

To serve, place the miso and lime quinoa on a plate, top with the sea bass and spoon over the spring onions, chilli and ginger. Serve alongside the stir-fried pak choi and yellow pepper.

Matcha cookies

Makes 10

INGREDIENTS

- 270g crunchy cashew nut butter
- 100g coconut palm sugar
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 egg
- 1 tbsp matcha powder
- 40g cashew nuts, roughly chopped

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 180°C/gas mark 4.

Put the cashew nut butter, coconut palm sugar and bicarbonate of soda into a bowl and mix together until combined, then beat in the egg to form a dough. Add the matcha powder and stir well, then stir in the chopped cashew nuts.

Form the cookie dough into 10 balls and place them on a baking tray lined with baking paper.

Flatten the balls with the palm of your hand to form a cookie shape (they will expand a bit when cooking).



Bake in the oven for 8-10 minutes, until lightly golden brown. Leave to cool for a few minutes, then place on a wire rack to cool and enjoy!