

# VOGUE

MAY

RAVISHING!  
**CAREY  
MULLIGAN**  
IN THE SEASON'S  
MOST  
ROMANTIC  
MOVIE

**EAST  
MEETS MET**  
THE COSTUME  
INSTITUTE'S  
CHINESE  
EXTRAVAGANZA

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#### LIFT OFF

A quintet of  
tinned French and  
Spanish delicacies  
(CLOCKWISE FROM  
TOP LEFT): cockles,  
sardines, mussels,  
razor clams, and  
squid. All had pride of  
place at the author's  
dinner party.

# YES, YOU CAN

As buzz builds around the finest preserved food, Tamar Adler sets herself a challenge: throw a dinner party for twelve where cooking means popping lids and pulling tabs. Photographed by Eric Boman.

**Y**es, yes, yes! I love cans. All of those preserved treasures.” The speaker is the wild-haired and lovely Julia Turshen—coauthor, with Gwyneth Paltrow and Mario Batali and Jody Williams of *Buvette*, among others, of six cookbooks. I’ve just asked her to collaborate with me on a dinner for twelve—entirely from cans.

I have long harbored a quiet and fervent passion for canned foods. My ardor is not for canned ham or cream-of-mushroom soup but for delicacies: frilled orange mussels layered in seaweed; piquillo peppers stuffed with langoustine; creamy butter beans. It is for the richest of Périgord’s renowned duck and geese, stored in cans of their own opulent fat; tiny anchovies from the Bay of Biscay’s coldest waters; silver sardines from Concarneau and Quiberon in Brittany, laid in local butter or fine olive oil.

It is for things whisked, ripe, and at the height of their season, from the Spanish coast, the rocky shores of Portugal, the verdant French countryside, and packed by expert hand in traditional canneries. The cans I love are not convenience ingredients for the hurried cook (à la Ms. Poppy Cannon and her infamous 1951 *Can-Opener Cook Book*) but, as an 1809 French newspaper said of a new invention by M. Nicolas Appert that sealed perishable foods from air, “a way to fix the seasons.”

Michael Pollan is with me. “It’s important to think of cans this way,” the *Food Rules* author wrote me. “People hear that they should eat ‘fresh, seasonal food,’ so they think anything is bad if it isn’t fresh from the farmers’ market. Canned foods can be a wonderful way to eat food harvested seasonally.”

In their home cultures, cans get pride of place. Conservas bars in Portugal, colmados in Catalonia and Galicia in Spain, and pintxos places in Basque Country all fill their menus with tinned delicacies. Any number of *ferme* restaurants around Périgord and Lyon in France serve their salades composées topped with creamy foie gras mousse and crisped confit from tins. In Barcelona, Julia tells me excitedly, she once used broken Spanish to get a taxi to the

restaurant Quimet & Quimet, a world-famous shrine to the finest tins. “I remember every detail of the meal to this day.”

Here in New York, there’s a glimpse of canned food on the gastronomic vanguard. In 2013, Torrisi and Parm veterans Nialls Fallon and Gareth Maccubbin opened the sardine tin-size bistro Maiden Lane in the East Village, its menu proudly boasting a section of Tinned Seafood. Fallon, whose bright eyes sparkle even more brightly when he speaks of his love of cans, counts on the Pollan set to fill chairs. “Once people understand what is in these tins, caring about seasonality *should* help them want to try them,” he tells me. In short order tiny restaurants Huertas and Donostia opened within five blocks of Maiden Lane to accolades in *The New York Times*, their menus focusing on ingredients *en métal*. So does the menu at Sample, a dark but pleasant galley on Brooklyn’s Smith Street. Tincan, a pop-up London restaurant by architecture firm AL\_A—soon en route to New York for a stint—is kitchenless, asking its diners to choose from 30 tins, which servers open, upend onto plates, and deliver to tables unadorned but for a tiny dish of salt, some parsley, shallots, chili, and bread.

Julia suggests a visit to a nine-year-old boutique called Despaña on Broome Street that specializes in imported tins. “You’re going to fall in love,” she tells me. She’s right. For all the beautiful chaos of a market stand, there is an equal and opposite loveliness to a shop like this: of complete order. Ebony shelves stretch floor to ceiling, stacked bottom to top with aligned towers of exquisite boxes and perfectly round tins.

We buy cans of Spanish cockles, printed with shells in alternating scarlet and deep blue, encased in similarly printed boxes; also, a very large tin wrapped in richly textured paper featuring a photograph of its contents, arrayed in Baroque *nature morte*—lobsters and scallops, a bouquet of parsley, and a bunch of tapered piquillo peppers. We buy dozens more, their designs ranging from romantic to stylized, their contents tantalizing. (Others arrive in the mail a few days later from Brazil and Michigan. From São Paulo: a deep-burnt orange tin of butter. From a store in Ann Arbor: sardines labeled “millésimées,” made by perhaps only ten grand canneries, primarily in France, and meant to be aged like fine wine. Each millésime, CONTINUED ON PAGE 253

in the line of fire now seem to be having a moment: Reese Witherspoon recently bought the rights to the book *Ashley's War: The Untold Story of a Team of Women Soldiers on the Special Ops Battlefield*, and Steven Spielberg is set to direct Jennifer Lawrence in *It's What I Do: A Photographer's Life of Love and War*, based on the memoir by Lynsey Addario.)

If the play is a surprising choice for Hathaway, it's an equally surprising one for Taymor, a theater artist of extravagant visual imagination, best known for *The Lion King* and lately on an upswing since she followed the debacle of *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark* with last year's magical staging of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. "What's appealing to me is the minimalism of a one-woman play that is extremely verbal—that is visual through its words," the director says. "We have a very simple set, and there's imagery other than just the pilot onstage"—her design team includes Riccardo Hernandez (sets), Peter Nigrini (projections), and her longtime collaborator and life partner, Elliot Goldenthal (music and soundscape)—"but if we had nothing but a black box or had to do it as a radio play, it should still work."

Working with a contemporary theme doesn't mean, however, that Taymor will be abandoning her fascination with the primitive and the folkloric. "The play has an extraordinary mythological-Biblical edge to it," she says. "The exhilaration of being an F-16 fighter pilot must be astounding. As children—as human beings—what would we wish to be able to do more than anything? To fly—to be free in this blue wonder."

Hathaway, meanwhile, has been exercising to be able to meet the physical standards set for Air Force pilots. ("I try to do 50 sit-ups and 27 push-ups in under a minute once a day," she says. "I'm looking for my inner testosterone.") She also read up on the history of unmanned aircraft and spoke with pilots at Creech Air Force Base in the Nevada desert. "My preparation usually is very analytic," she says. "But I'm so looking forward to just being in the rehearsal room with Julie and experiencing that magical thing where you relax and let the character sink into your bones."

That kind of collaboration—working with other artists at the top of their games—is what Taymor describes as her equivalent of the pilot from *Grounded*'s blissful state of being in the blue. Until recently, Hathaway—who will next be seen on-screen in the Nancy Meyers comedy *The Intern*—might have said something similar. "I would have been

really comfortable telling you a few years ago that for me it's nailing a take," she says. "The feeling that I had when I finished *Rachel Getting Married*—I'll never forget it. I was absolutely in the blue. That's the purest it's ever been for me. It was 'This feeling right now—I've earned it.' Now I find it more in my personal life." She pauses and gives me a mock-serious look, adding, "And with all due respect, I've earned that, too." □

## OPEN SEASON

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past. He's fascinated when I tell him that we call those clothes "vintage."

It's the kind of larger-than-life profile that makes Kyrgios a hit with his fans, who relate to @kIngyrglos on Instagram as much as they do on the court. He recently conducted a Twitter interview with his 125,000 followers, for instance, in which he responded to a photo of his younger self wearing a Wu-Tang Clan shirt and self-consciously holding a racket. "Chubby?" he typed. "I call it cuddly. . . ." Combining the punk edge of Andre Agassi with the media-genic appeal of Ansel Elgort, Kyrgios is inadvertently becoming the first tennis player-cum-teen idol in the age of social media. "He's polarizing," Gimelstob says, "and that's why he has the makings of an iconic star. He's box office. You can see the future in him."

Roger Federer agrees: "Nick is definitely one of the young and exciting players in tennis right now," he says. "And I hope he will keep improving and put himself in position to win slams." The Swiss player invited him to Zurich last year for a week of training. While their playing styles couldn't be more different—flashy, charismatic showmanship versus a masterful art of the sport—Kyrgios considers Federer "by far the greatest of all time." Even just running drills with him instilled a new confidence: "You feel like if you can match him on the training court, you can do a lot of other things."

While his schedule will have Kyrgios all over Europe this season, his lifestyle remains decidedly small town. "My favorite city in the world is Canberra," he says. "It's perfect for me." He's stayed close to childhood friends and is looking forward to practicing in Lynham, where a new \$22 million tennis center, partly inspired by his success, will open in July. Yet despite the mounting hype, Kyrgios still feels he has a lot to achieve. "I had a chance to meet Michael Jordan at the U.S. Open," he says, "but I turned it down." Why? "I didn't think I was worthy to shake his hand." □

## YES, YOU CAN

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or vintage, I learn upon slitting open cardboard boxes, gets a uniquely designed tin. Mine, labeled 2009, 2011, and 2012, are printed with a watercolor of rocky shores or cartoon fish on a French holiday.)

At the cashier at Despaña I am reminded of a grave misconception: that tinned food is ipso facto for the budget-conscious. My bill nears the cost of a month's rent in an outer borough. This before wine, and before caviar—which, as the tinned thing the unconverted readily accept as a luxury, it feels unjust not to include. Why so expensive? "Take Galician cockles" (which cost nearly \$40 a can), Fallon explains. "The fishermen have to go into the water and harvest them, one by one." They have to work quickly, at low tide and in rocky terrain, so it's easy to get hurt. "They haul them in buckets. At the canneries, the cockles must be inspected by hand, then steamed to ensure even cooking, strained from their liquid, and packed into cans." The process is equally laborious for the rest of our bounty—the quill of each squid removed meticulously, each pepper and langoustine cooked and peeled or shelled.

I note, a bit obviously, how well all of my cans travel—on a bicycle with me or in boxes and envelopes to my front door—and I have no concerns about spoilage. I am happily (and again obviously) surprised that I can stack them in a compact line beside the stairs to our basement. A few days before the dinner I knock a stack over. It topples with a lot of bangs and then is easily righted.

Oh, cans. These, of course, are the very qualities for which the technology was invented. Emperor General Napoleon, of "an army marches on its stomach" renown, offered 12,000 francs to anyone who could make food more portable for the army. *Confiseur* Appert won the prize with his method of preserving and bottling—and months later it was discovered that tin would work as well for this purpose as glass. (In a bit of rather beautiful human technological hiccupery, the can opener wasn't invented until more than 40 years later. In the interim, eaters followed a version of this crude advice, printed on the cans themselves: "Cut round the top near the outer edge with a chisel and hammer.")

The day of our dinner is white-skied and breezy. At 4:00 p.m., Julia—whose smile is so sure, it's no surprise such admired chefs have asked to work with her—and I sit at my high wooden counter to plan our menu. We realize a tin's packaging is at best suggestive. We won't CONTINUED ON PAGE 254

know *precisely* what our ingredients are until we can see and taste them. Mussels, yes. Millésimées sardines, of course, but exactly *how* much vinegar will they be bathed in, how much of a listed herb, how sweet or spicy a pepper?

We begin popping tops and dipping spoons and tasting. We fish clams out of lightly salted brine with our fingers, poke little forks into marinated mussels and octopus, share a slightly soft but flavorful white asparagus. We taste cockles, anchovies, small squids packed among lightly stewed sweet onions, duck hearts, and foie gras. The only failures are several cans of sea urchin, proving a good and essential point: Some things, even harvested carefully and packed lovingly, do not fare well in tin.

The first to arrive is Julia's wife, Grace Bonney, founder of Design\*Sponge, then the film editor Kate Abernathy and the *Architectural Digest* editor Sam Cochran. We usher them to my rooftop garden, where we set out a long platter of chilled octopus, razor clams, mussels, cockles, and asparagus with garlic mayonnaise and green olives. Julia is permanently calm, but I'm anxious and repeatedly urge everyone to "try it. It's so delicious." Julia has told me that Grace may be hesitant, and Sam, I can't help notice, looks peaked. Though we've considerably removed each delicate ingredient from its tin, an *aura* of having recently been in aluminum clearly remains. Without shells, the seafood looks as though it's shivering, its flesh ranging in tone from white to light cream. "I'm just a bit . . . scared," Sam admits.

But then Zoë Sheehan Saldaña—artist, not actress—the photographer Andrea Gentl, and several enthusiastic

others arrive. "Oh, my God," whispers Andrea, at her first taste of the penny-size peach cockles. "Like truffles, no?" says Julia. Several of us eat them in silence, marveling. They *are* a little like the oddest, most wondrous truffles. They taste at once piercingly fresh and transformed in the mysterious mellowing that can happen in a can.

Once each mussel and cockle has been speared on a toothpick and eaten, we return to the kitchen, where Julia and I serve pan con tomate with dark-pink anchovies; vintage sardines with harissa on small, crisp baguette toast; and a big salad of lettuces, canned beans, parsley, marjoram, cherry tomatoes, topped with luxurious flakes of our most precious ingredient: a can of rosy ventresca tuna whose price equals three bottles of the red wine we're drinking, a cool Occhipinti Alea Viva.

The flavors are immediate and concentrated; they have a resonance that inspires conversation. We talk about what reservations any of us had had. "I thought everything would be bland and metallic," confesses Sam. There's also the notion that canned ingredients are inevitably less nutritious than their fresh counterparts—which is patently not true. In some foods, nutrients go *up* in the canning process: In the glorious sardine, for example, with its bones and its nutrient-rich oil, and in canned peaches (rarely delicious but durable), the process can actually make the vitamins they contain easier to digest.

A final guest, Christopher Lee of NoHo café Il Buco Alimentari & Vineria, arrives. To the already bountiful table we add a platter of hot squid rice; one of langoustine-stuffed peppers from

the Spanish village of Lodosa drizzled with olive oil; and another of sliced duck hearts with horseradish salsa verde and miche toast.

"I cannot remember the last time I had food like this," says Christopher, who is known for his years in the kitchen at Chez Panisse and for creating that most artisanal of foods, salumi, at Il Buco. "It is so simple, and so full of terroir," he says, referring to the gastronomical ideal eating locally is founded on: that ingredients taste of the soil or grass or salt water in which they grew. If it isn't convenient to fly to Galicia for cockles, opening up a petite can of them—culinarily speaking—is nearly the same thing.

We serve a large iced tin of paddlefish caviar with warm blini, crème fraîche, and minced shallots. We serve little pain de mie sandwiches filled with butter and foie gras, bought by my husband and me months earlier in Périgord from the most honest and solemn steward of those contentious ducks and geese whom I have ever met.

The meal lasts past 2:00 A.M. and takes on the timbre of a bacchanal. Talk now turns to apocalypse, as it does when one is surrounded by imperishable food. A guest brings up a television show in which each episode features a different sect of Americans, preparing in earnest for a different kind of doomsday. We look around at the things we haven't yet gotten to—vintage sardines, more caviar, more bottles of Alea Viva, two kinds of pâté—envision our own doomsday preparation, and decide that if, as Hollywood and the numerologists say, it really is the end of the world as we know it, we find ourselves amply provisioned—not to survive but to celebrate. □

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