

BON APPÉTIT

*The best of French gastronomy
at home and away*

PIECE OF CAKE

French-born master *pâtissier* **Eric Lanlard** tells **PETER STEWART** why he wants to celebrate the quintessential British institution of afternoon tea

The immediate impression that I get from chatting to Eric Lanlard is that he is not your average baker. Firstly, he is fascinated by stars – of the galactic kind – and has signed up to be a Virgin Galactic astronaut. Secondly, he believes in reaching a wide audience: “It’s important to cater for everyone when it comes to baking,” he says.

He has done just that with his latest book, *Eric Lanlard’s Afternoon Tea*, which features more than 80 sweet and savoury recipes that are designed to be easily achievable by home cooks.

These range from sinfully delicious teatime treats to gluten-free cakes such as rich chocolate, clementine and pomegranate,

and carrot and coconut. Having sampled all three, I found it impossible to tell that anything was missing. “I put this down to taste,” Lanlard says. “Instead of worrying about making a cake or dessert a work of art, you should focus on the taste – that’s the most important thing,” he assures me.

The celebrated *pâtissier*’s passion for baking stems from his childhood. “While growing up in Quimper in Brittany, I would make regular trips to the *pâtisserie* with my mother. I was dazzled by the elegance of the cakes on display and the celebrations that came with baking,” he recalls.

At the age of 17, Lanlard became an apprentice at the Pâtisserie Le Grand in his home town.

Afterwards, he completed his national service in the kitchens of the French Navy flagship *Jeanne d’Arc*, where his baking impressed President François Mitterrand. In 1989 he moved to London after being recruited by restaurateurs Albert and Michel Roux, and rose to become their head pastry chef. Then, in 1995, he left to set up his own business.

“I’ve been in Britain so long ➤➤

LEFT: Eric Lanlard has created a variety of teatime treats, including clementine and pomegranate cake (ABOVE)



PHOTOGRAPHS: KATE WHITAKER





TOP: Eric Lanlard leads a masterclass; **ABOVE:** Tartellettes aux fruits is one of his favourites

that I've started to feel a little bit British," he admits, something that is reflected in the new book; Lanlard has created his own take on scones – the favourite British teatime treat – adding orange blossom and bee pollen, or pistachio and rose, to give them a Middle Eastern flavour.

Of course, there are plenty of French recipes too. Among his favourites is *tartellettes aux fruits*, which he says leaves him mesmerised whenever he passes a display at his local *pâtisserie* back in Quimper. "They're gorgeous and easy to make, but you have to do things properly. The pastry has to be short and buttery, and the fruit perfectly ripe," he insists.

With his exquisite mix of flavours and distinctive recipes, it is not surprising that he has become a cake purveyor to the stars. His clients have included Sir Elton John, Elizabeth Hurley, Madonna and even The Queen. "I love to create something bespoke, something magical that people will enjoy on their happy occasion," he says.

However, it might come as a shock to learn that someone with such a great passion for baking is not a great fan of cakes. "I have never had a sweet tooth," he admits. "For me, becoming a pastry chef was not about eating cakes; it was about creating them."

Lanlard's ultimate dream was to share his passion for baking with everyone around him. He realised this aim in 2007 with the opening of *Cake Boy*, his *café-pâtisserie* in Battersea, South London, where he runs masterclasses for baking enthusiasts.

Does he have any tips for the novice baker? "Don't start too high. You have to start with the basics, which include learning how to make good pastry. And make sure you always use the best ingredients, which you can find in many supermarkets these days," he assures me.

And what about another book? "Yes, I definitely want to write another," he says enthusiastically. With such a meteoric rise to fame in the last ten years, the sky's the limit for the master *pâtissier* and would-be astronaut. 🚀

● Eric Lanlard will be appearing at the *Cake & Bake Show* at the ExCel Centre in London on 7-9 October (tel: 0844 854 1364, www.thecakeandbakeshow.co.uk).

● A full-day *Cake Boy* cookery class with Eric Lanlard costs £250 and a cupcake masterclass costs £95 (tel: 0207 978 5555, www.cake-boy.co.uk).

COCONUT MACARONS ROCHER

These little coconut mounds are very easy to make, which means this is a perfect recipe for children to get involved with.

INGREDIENTS

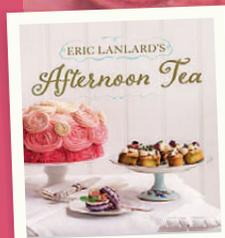
- 4 rice/wafer paper sheets
- 175g/6oz golden caster sugar
- 250g/9oz desiccated coconut
- 3 egg whites

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/fan 160°C/350°F/gas mark 4. Line a baking sheet with rice/wafer paper.
2. Put the sugar and coconut in a bowl

MAKES
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3. and mix together. In a separate clean, dry bowl, whisk the egg whites to soft peaks, then fold in the coconut mixture.
3. Dollop spoonfuls of the mixture on to the rice/wafer paper, building each into a pyramid shape with your fingers and the back of a spoon.
4. Bake in the oven for 15 minutes until golden. Leave to cool on the baking sheet for five minutes, then transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely.
5. Break the excess rice/wafer paper away from the base of the macarons. Store in an airtight container.

Tip: For more indulgence, drizzle over or dip the bases into melted dark chocolate.



Eric Lanlard's *Afternoon Tea* is published by Mitchell Beazley, priced £20.

PHOTOGRAPHS: KATE WHITAKER; LUIGI CINARANO