

Super Mario

THE BABBO COOKBOOK UNLOCKS MARIO BATALI'S SUCCESS

Only **Mario Batali**, the ponytailed, orange-clog-wearing, former Deadhead celebrity chef, could get this vegetarian to eat lardo. We're discussing one of his 185,000 passions: the salami kitchen, where he and his crew produce preserved meats for three older passions, the restaurants he co-owns: Lupa, a downtown trattoria; Esca, in the theater district, where *crudo*, "Italian sushi," reigns; and Babbo, the three-star jewel in the crown, a neotraditional Italian restaurant in Greenwich Village. Neotraditional? "We treat our food the way Italians use food in Italy—intuitively." Maybe that's why he can get New Yorkers to fork over \$10 a plate for *testa*, Italian headcheese—his intuitive use of pig's head, kosher salt, celery, carrots, pepper, and gelatin. And now you too can boil a pig's head for three hours and make your own *testa* at home. Why? Because another new passion, *The Babbo Cookbook*, is being released this spring by Clarkson Potter. There are the two prime-time Food Network series, *Mario Eats Italy* and *Molto Mario*. How many passions left? His wife, Susi Cahn, and their two young sons, but we're losing count. Back to lardo. We're dubious, but Batali, all down-to-earth warmth and confidence, saunters back into the kitchen of Babbo and comes out with two pieces of grilled bread topped with see-through, thin slices of white stuff that melts as he speaks. "Taste it," he says. And who could say no? It's rich and unctuous and, well, porky. It takes us two days to summon the courage to E-mail his assistant. "What is lardo anyway?" And thank God we got our answer via cyberspace. "Lardo is literally fat," comes the response. Pig fat. Which accounts for the fact that even the audacious *Babbo Cookbook* dares no recipe.

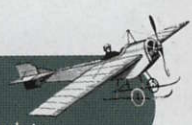
—HELEN SCHULMAN



MANGIA, MANGIA
Mario Batali, photographed at his restaurant Babbo, in New York.

WORLD BEAT

Tokyo's ultrahip, members-only club, Tokyo Salon (5-47-6 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku), is now open to the public—for lunch.... In **Dublin** and everywhere else, people are going mad for *Artpack*, a set of playing cards designed by Irish artists (including U2's Bono), which benefits the Irish Hospice Foundation. Buy it at www.artpack.ie.



LOOK, PRUNELLA. A BOOK ABOUT US!
From left: *Bright Young Things* Selina Blow, David Adjaye, and India Jane Birley.



London Sprawling

THE AUTHORS OF *BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS* TURN A KEEN EYE TO BRITAIN

As a compendium for obsessives of the jet-set pecking order, interior decorators, and house burglars, *Bright Young Things: London* (Assouline) will be an invaluable resource. Not that the British edition of this society I-spy book (a U.S. version was published a couple of years ago with a thinly disguised mandate to give Manhattan's heiresses compelling occupations) isn't drenched with certifiable fabulousness and achievement—it's just that the brand-name cash reserves necessary to properly compete in the transatlantic game of lifestyle perfectionism are less in evidence. Described glowingly by friends and relatives, and photographed by *V.E.* snapper **Jonathan Becker**, the almost three dozen subjects anointed with **Evelyn Waugh's** venerable idiom appear enviably composed as international ambassadors of refinement. The subjects' poses range from the conventional to the oddly pornographic (fashion stylist **Charlotte Stockdale**), from the supremely graceful (prima ballerina **Darcey Bussell**) to the eccentric (art dealer **Detmar Blow** luxuriating, sister **Selina** sporting a **Philip Treacy** hat resembling a pair of buttocks). The book may ultimately migrate from the coffee table to a downstairs bathroom, perhaps to return in years hence as a curiosity of the times, but nonetheless its prime mover, London migrant **Brooke de Ocampo**, has comprehensively penetrated the social reaches of her destination and will someday be able to return to New York with a souvenir—in hardcover.

—EDWARD HELMORE



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