

HOUSE & Garden

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Talking With: Alex Kapranos



Before Alex Kapranos became the lead singer of the platinum-selling alt-rock band Franz Ferdinand, the Scottish guitarist worked in restaurants for a decade as a chef, wine waiter, and kitchen porter. His new book, *Sound Bites* (Penguin), based on his column for *The Guardian*, is a chronicle of eating on tour.

HG Alex, describe your kitchen experience.

AK I started with prep work for cold starters, then was put in charge of sweets. I made a lot of crème brûlée.

HG Do you still cook?

AK I love cooking and miss it when I'm on the road. I have friends over and make Greek meatballs with toasted sesame seeds, parsley, and mint. Very tasty. I've also discovered the joys of growing your own vegetables. I've got a place outside Glasgow in Dumfries where I grow parsnips, zucchini, and long beans.

HG What kitchen gear do you consider essential?

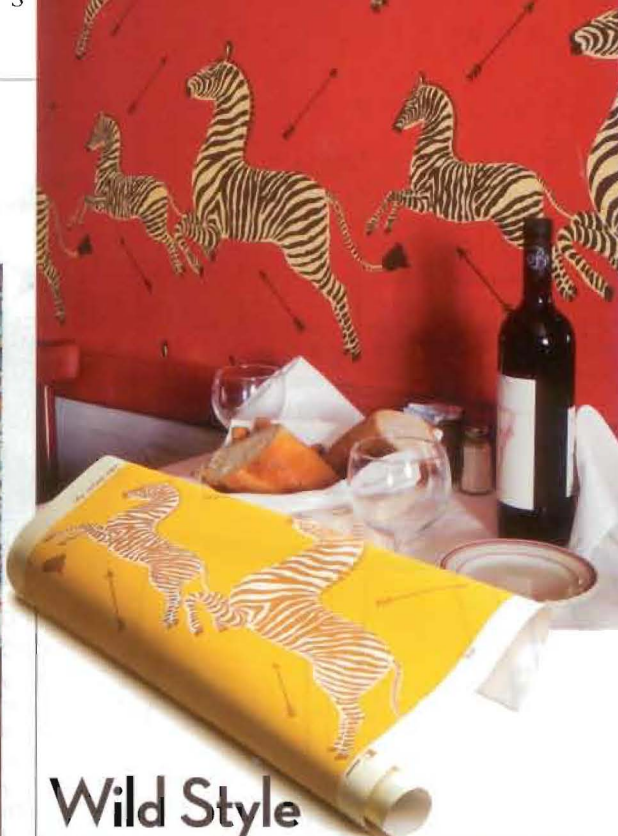
AK I like a kitchen to be simple. I need a gas stove top, a decent-sized oven, two sharp knives, a colander, and a cast-iron pan—the kind that isn't any good until you've used it a thousand times. I like Le Creuset pans for cooking things slowly. I like fresh fruit juice, so I did splash out recently on a juicer device, but there are 15 pieces to clean, so I only use it from time to time. I still use the same corkscrew I had when I was a waiter.

HG Can you recommend music to cook by?

AK I like something upbeat. When I worked in kitchens, we listened to the Stooges and the Buzzcocks. Now when I cook I put on CSS, a Brazilian girl group, or Sly and the Family Stone.

HG What's harder, being a chef or a rock star?

AK Both are stressful. The first time you step into those kitchen whites, you can either deal or not deal. It's the same with being a rock star: up on stage, you can either do it or you can't. —INGRID ABRAMOVITCH



Wild Style

What La Grenouille is to New York's ladies who lunch, Gino's, a clubby Italian eatery on Lexington Avenue, is to the old guard of the city's design community.

One beloved feature of Gino's decor is the playful red zebra-and-arrow-motif wallpaper, custom-designed for the restaurant by SCALAMANDRÉ in the 1940s. Now you won't have to order a plate of linguine to enjoy it. The Zebra design is being reissued as part of Scalamandrè's Cabinet de Curiosités collection, and will be available in a variety of colorways, including Masai Red, Zanzibar Gold, and Serengeti Green.

The reissue was prompted when the original wooden printing screens for the motif were discovered while the company was moving out of its old Long Island City factory. "The pattern has always been one of our favorites," says Scalamandrè copresident Bob Bitter. "We thought maybe it was time to revive it." The Scalamandrè family had been friendly with Gino Circiello, the original owner of the restaurant. Circiello is said to have been a fan of big game hunting, which doubtless inspired the motif. Yet Bitter points out that Scalamandrè softened the blood sport aspect "so it looks like the zebras are dancing, not running from the arrows." All the same, the wallpaper hits the bull's-eye. —GERALDINE DE PUY

Editor's Choice

The **HOOK & GO**, a new favorite of our food editor, LORA ZARUBIN, has radically simplified farmers' market shopping in California. Outfitted with a pair of wheels and a rack with hooks, the Hook & Go carries plastic bags without squashing your produce. Invented by a Canadian whose last name was Hook, the cart has achieved cult status in San Francisco and Beverly Hills. "People stop you in the street if you're wheeling one," says Bobby Winston, who sells the Hook & Go at his store, Bay Crossings, in San Francisco's Ferry Building, for \$50. Bay Crossings: 415-362-0717. hookandgo.com. hammacherschlemmer.com.

