



• ONE •  
THE BLUE BOOK

Sugar & Salt: A Year At Home and At Sea  
Book One - The Blue Book

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# Introduction



My life is lived in two distinct places, I cook in both, but the settings of each are very different. When I'm at home in the winter, my meals are about family and the occasional entertaining meal with friends and extended family. When I'm at sea, I'm cooking for 30 people every day on my floating, sailing restaurant, the Schooner *J. & E. Rigg*. Unusual, perhaps, but not as unfamiliar as might seem at first glance, as food and community are what bring us all together and that happens on a daily basis whether at our small family table or around a larger table with a larger family of guests who sail with us during the summer months.

Whether the table is small or large, the importance of gathering to pause, give thanks, eat well and laugh together is not to be underestimated, no matter how mundane or routine. Those moments become snapshots. Individual moments, like the grains of sand on a beach; each moment, when gathered together, creating the whole. I feel the same about the food I use and the meals I create from them. Each of the ingredients, plus the thought, the time, even the presentation are all individual parts that become the whole.

This book and my life contain both sugar and salt; which is no surprise as they are basic ingredients in cooking. But my salt isn't only the salt at the table or on the counter; it's the salty ocean that surrounds my family, my work, and my food as I cook for my passengers/guests each year, from May through October, as we sail our way past the islands of Penobscot Bay, Maine. The food that I create there, and just as carefully (though in much smaller quantities!) at home for my family in the winter, all becomes a part of the individual, indivisible, moments of my life.

I suppose it's no surprise that it's the simplest things – for both food and memories – that stand out. I've often found that the simplest meals are the ones that are remembered most. I think that may be part of the reason that many of our passengers return year after year; the memories created on the *Rigg* are, while simple, nearly impossible to forget.

In this book, and future books in this series, I want to share bits of my life – not just recipes, but the choices and thoughts behind the recipes. Because I'm constantly creating, this cookbook is one of many that will become a series, not just one that will stand alone. It's written with flexibility and seasonality woven throughout its pages. Most specifically the Leftover pieces (pages 22, 110 and 120) and Creative Kitchen (page 88) give you a window into how I think about the creation of my meals. Organized by month, the

recipes have enough structure for someone shopping at the grocery store and enough detail for those picking straight from the garden.

## Then and Now

My love affair with Maine, sailing, food and the blue-eyed, bearded man in my life all began the same summer. Before that, Maine was that place between Canada and the Atlantic Ocean, I didn't know what a schooner was, food came exclusively from the grocery store, and the blue-eyed man was a blue-eyed dream.

In the last stages of my senior year at Michigan State University I knew that I wanted to learn how to sail, I wanted to travel, and I *didn't* want to call home for money. Enter serendipity and some good universal juju juice and... I met a friend who knew someone... whose parents owned a boat in Maine... and these parents were looking for a mess cook who could start immediately. I was so excited to get the job that when my mom asked how much it paid, I didn't have an answer for her; I never asked!

Two days (and nearly 24 hours of tag-team driving) after graduating from college, I was in Maine, on a schooner. That morning, I met Jon, the blue-eyed, bearded man; he's now my husband, Captain Jon Finger. He's also known as Papa to our two daughters, Chlöe and Ella. And since 1998, we've owned, sailed, and cherished the Maine windjammer, the Schooner *J. & E. Rigg*.

On schooners, I found a seemingly never ending curiosity about food made by hand. Yeasty dough rising on the warming shelf by the stove pipe, jams made from strawberries picked and delivered the same day and New England Boiled Dinner made from brisket corned by the local butcher. Everything tasted so good and had such integrity of place.

As I've worked my way up from mess cook to Chef/Owner, my journey has mirrored the food movement in this country. Finding that food doesn't just show up on grocery store shelves. Discovering that the best food often comes from ingredients straight from the local farm, the local butcher, and/or my garden. Learning, sharing and exploring food made by hand.

After working for other boats and restaurants for years and finding ourselves far away from home, pregnant with our first of two and needing a change, we decided to come





## BY HAND

### Handsewn Apron

The tools of a cook's trade take many shapes and forms – knives, cutting boards, whisks and strainers –and are influenced by ethnicity, geography and place (restaurant kitchen vs. campfire.) One tool that is constant throughout, but also takes many forms, is a cook's apron.

My grandmother used to have at least one hanging in the pantry always ready for use. They were the bibbed kind made with cotton gingham and decorated with ruffles around the edges. My dad, the dishwasher and general after-dinner manager, often wears one to protect his clothes; they range from my grandma's old ruffled ones to a basic dish towel tucked into the waistband of his pants. My mom, especially on holidays, wears one. Our girls have outgrown the ones that I made of oil cloth which are water proof and perfect for finger painting and other messy projects. I wear one constantly. In years past it was the traditional white chef's apron but now that my galley is less formal, my aprons have more personality.

The apron I reach for depends on my mood and the task at hand. Many of mine are homemade, some are old, and a number of them use recycled material. No matter what, however, part of my everyday routine before I begin cooking is to choose an apron that suits my day.

Because I use aprons every day, and have mess cooks/assistants who also need to be kept well stocked with aprons, I make a lot of my own. Because I need comfortable, easy to wash aprons, and because I love anything upcycled, I often make them from t-shirts.

When I begin my search for suitable fabrics for the apron projects that swim around in my head, my thoughts turn, not to a fabric store, but either to our barn (the repository for all old, ill-fitting, under-loved clothing) or to Goodwill. Of course one could purchase a brand new cotton-jersey t-shirt for this project or buy cotton-jersey off a bolt, but chances are the quality won't be what is needed with the former (regular undershirt material is







# May

The gardens, the boat, the girls, the house, the chickens, the bees, oh my! May is a very busy month for us - one where we shift our entire focus from land to sea. In the spring, our schedule blooms to life just as the bulbs in the garden begin to show their brilliant colors and the trees turn to a sea of lime-pea-Kelly -chartreuse-green. As the weather moves through predictable rainy then sunny patterns, we haul the Riggin out of the water, hoping for one of the sunny times. And then the lilacs bloom. And then we go sailing. A pattern repeats.



## FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS

### Oysters Then and Now

This year the *Riggin* celebrates the 85th anniversary of her launching as an oyster dredger in 1927 on the Maurice River in Dorchester, New Jersey. One of the many in the *Riggin* fleet, Charles Riggin, a fisherman, had her built and named her after his two sons Jacob and Edward. She gained a fine reputation on the Delaware Bay as an able sailor, winning the only Oyster Schooner Race ever held in 1929. Although she doesn't dredge for oysters any longer, in honor of her history and to celebrate every week, we serve oysters from the Pemaquid Oyster Company located in Damariscotta, Maine just down the bay a bit from our homeport in Rockland.

Pemaquid Oyster Company was founded over 25 years ago along the Damariscotta River, a place that has oysters steeped in its shores and history. Evidence that oysters were part of the Native American diet over 1,000 years ago, the Glidden Midden, located on the shores of the river, is a huge ancient pile of oyster shells and the largest north of Georgia. Jeff (Smoky) McKeen, part of Pemaquid Oyster Company, delivers oysters to us, 120 per burlap bag, which then become appetizers for the first dinner on board each trip.

Oysters, like wine, carry the specific tastes of the place where they are grown, sometimes called 'merroir,' making the connection to the more commonly used word 'terroir' typically referring to wine production. However fancy you get with the language, the fact is that oysters from different areas have different flavors even if they are the same species. Pemaquid Oyster Company, like most oyster growers from Texas to New Brunswick, grows *Crassostrea virginica* more commonly known as either Eastern or American oysters.

You may have heard the old adage to never eat oysters during the months without 'r' in their name (which would mean from May to August). This may have been true years ago, but not so now. When oysters were first harvested on the *Riggin* in the 1920's and 30's, on-board refrigeration wasn't what it is today. The *Riggin*, a second-generation-style oyster-dredger, was built for speed, to get her daily catch back to the dock as soon as possible. This was because the fishing vessel that returned to dock first earned the best price; also, the fastest boat had the freshest oysters that spent the least amount of time in the warm summer temperatures. Now, we are lucky enough to have oysters plucked from the sea and chilled immediately. In addition, oysters spawn in water temperatures of 70 degrees

or higher. Spawning tends to give a different (some say unpleasant) flavor to oysters and for several weeks after spawning, having expended all of their energy for reproductive pursuits, they have little substance to them. As anyone who has had the bracing opportunity to swim in Maine water knows, rarely and only in specific harbors does the temperature climb that high, so they don't typically spawn here, but instead are grown from 'seed', tiny oysters 2mm in size. What all this means in a nutshell (or oyster shell) is that we are free to eat oysters all summer long here in Maine!

Because oysters are so delicate in flavor and so nuanced in how they express their particular growing environment, I don't tend to serve them with much adornment. The French way is to have them with some lemon wedges, a baguette (or rye bread), really good butter and some sea salt. Sometimes I'll make a mignonette, a jazzy cocktail sauce or bake them with a roasted shallot breading, but most of the time I love to serve (and eat!) them without anything at all to really savor their individuality.

#### Oysters Mignonette

*A classic and elegant way to serve oysters. To stabilize the oysters in their shells when serving, place them on either crushed ice, salt or a bed of seaweed. Plan on serving 3 to 4 well-scrubbed oysters per person if serving as an appetizer.*





## Chicken, Basil and Sun-dried Tomato Sausage with Broccoli Raab over Ricotta Gnocchi

*If you can't find broccoli raab, spinach makes a good substitute. Use about 4 cups spinach (about 5 ounces) in place of the broccoli raab. If you use spinach instead, don't blanch before adding it to the sausage but simply add it directly.*

*If you have any leftovers, this makes a terrific soup the following day with the addition of a can of fire roasted tomatoes. Add the leftovers to a pot and cover generously with chicken broth and the tomatoes. Bring to a boil and serve with grated Asiago cheese as a garnish. Serves 4 to 6*

10 ounces broccoli raab, stem ends removed and chopped into 1 to 2-inch lengths  
3 tablespoons olive oil (2 for cooking the sausage, 1 to drizzle on the gnocchi at the end)  
1 pound Chicken, Basil and Sun-dried Tomato Sausage (page 49) or sweet Italian sausage, casing removed  
1 cup red onion, peeled and sliced; about 1/2 an onion  
1/2 yellow bell pepper, cored, seeded and sliced; about 1 cup  
1 1/2 tablespoons minced garlic; about 3 cloves  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
several grinds fresh black pepper  
zest from one lemon  
3/4 cup grated Asiago cheese  
1 Ricotta Gnocchi recipe (page 46)  
2 to 4 tablespoons of the gnocchi water

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Drop the broccoli raab into the boiling water and blanch for 2 to 3 minutes. This leaches out some of the bitterness, but the point is not to cook them all the way through. Remove from the water with a slotted spoon or basket strainer and set aside. Reuse the same pot of water to cook the gnocchi when you are ready.

Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat and add the olive oil. On one side of the pan add the sausage and the other, the onions. Use tongs to break up the sausage and to stir the onions. When the onions are beginning to turn brown on the edges, about 7 to 10 minutes, add the peppers on top of the onions and stir. When the peppers are tender but still firm, about 4 minutes, make a well in the sausage and add the garlic to the well; this uses the fat from the sausage to help sauté the garlic. Sauté an additional 30 seconds to one minute and then mix it all together, adding the salt, pepper and lemon zest. Add the broccoli raab, turn with tongs and remove from heat. Add the reserved gnocchi water to loosen the sauce if needed.

## Hummus and Parsley Rice Cakes

Serves 4 to 6; makes about 12 cakes

2 cups cooked jasmine rice  
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil  
1 (15.5-ounce) can garbanzo beans, drained  
1 cup minced parsley  
2 tablespoons tamari  
1/4 cup tahini  
2 cloves garlic, mashed  
1 tablespoon lemon juice

Measure the rice into a medium sized bowl. Pulse all ingredients EXCEPT rice and oil in a food processor. Combine with rice and form into golf ball-sized balls and then press into patties. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat and add half the oil to the pan. Place the patties carefully into the skillet and fry 3 to 4 minutes per side in 2 or 3 batches, adding a little more oil for each batch. Serve with Chive and Tomato Garnish (page 119).



# Creative Kitchen

## Tools For Inspired Cooks

Most recipes do not stand on their own, but are enhanced by the other dishes with which they are combined. Those who need exact recipes to do their cooking work should simply enjoy this window into a different way of thinking about how recipes can connect with each other. Those who wish to explore - have at it and don't stop here!

<b>Handkerchief Pasta</b>	<i>with</i> Chicken, Basil & Sun-dried Tomato Sausage + Spinach + Peppers + Cream	<i>with</i> Chili-Rubbed Pot Roast + Onions + Cream	<i>in</i> Cream Of Mushroom Soup, Asian Style
<b>Chili-Rubbed Pot Roast</b>	<i>with</i> Blue Cheese Dipping Sauce	<i>in</i> A Sandwich With Sourdough Bread	<i>with</i> Spinach, Green Bean & Corn Salad
<b>Thai-Inspired Maine Shrimp Cakes</b>	<i>with</i> Cucumber & Roasted Corn Salsa	<i>with</i> Yogurt & Chive Sauce	<i>with</i> Chive & Tomato Garnish
<b>Pan-Fried Monkfish</b>	<i>with</i> Yogurt & Chive Sauce	<i>with</i> Black Bean, Avocado And Goat Cheese Salad	<i>with</i> Chive & Tomato Garnish
<b>Melted Gouda, Artichoke &amp; Spinach</b>	<i>in</i> An Omelet	<i>on</i> A Pizza	<i>with</i> Handkerchief Pasta
<b>Broccoli With Roasted Red Onion</b>	<i>in</i> Chicken Pot Pie (In place of asparagus)	<i>with</i> Crispy Pasta	<i>with</i> Creamy Lemon Over Whole Wheat Penne
<b>Pesto Roasted Asparagus</b>	<i>in</i> An Omelet	<i>on</i> A Pizza	<i>with</i> Handkerchief Pasta
<b>Lobster &amp; Spinach Salad</b>	<i>on</i> A Pizza	<i>on</i> An Omelet	<i>with</i> Ricotta Gnocchi
<b>Mignonette Sauce</b>	<i>as</i> Dressing For Kale Salad		

<b>Lime &amp; Chive Aioli</b>	<i>on</i> Pan-Fried Monkfish or Seared Scallops	<i>on</i> Thai-Inspired Maine Shrimp Cakes	
<b>Lobster And Avocado Dip/Salad</b>	<i>with</i> Whole Wedged Tomato	<i>on</i> Sourdough Bread + Havarti + Tomato Slices	
<b>Spinach, Green Bean &amp; Corn Salsa</b>	<i>with</i> Ricotta Gnocchi	<i>with</i> Handkerchief Pasta	
<b>Risotto</b>	<i>with</i> Chili-Rubbed Pot Roast	<i>with</i> Broccoli + Roasted Red Onion	
<b>Root Vegetable &amp; Mushroom Soup</b>	<i>with</i> Ricotta Gnocchi	<i>in</i> Baked Gnocchi With Garlic & Cream	
<b>Spinach And Lime Confetti Salad</b>	<i>with</i> Pan-Fried Monkfish	<i>with</i> Hummus & Parsley Rice	<i>with</i> Seared Scallops
<b>Hummus And Parsley Rice Cakes</b>	<i>with</i> Chive & Tomato Garnish	<i>with</i> Cucumber & Roasted Corn Salsa	
<b>Potato Cilantro Waffles</b>	<i>with</i> Poached Egg + Lobster & Avocado Dip/Salad	<i>with</i> Creamy Stilton Dressing + Kale Salad + Chili-Rubbed Pot Roast	
<b>Roasted Carrots, Red Onion &amp; Kale</b>	<i>in</i> Baked Gnocchi With Garlic & Cream		
<b>Chicken, Basil And Sun-dried Tomato Sausage</b>	<i>with</i> Kale Salad + Handkerchief Pasta		
<b>Cucumber, Udon And Toasted Sesame Salad</b>	<i>with</i> Spicy Green Beans & Orange Bell Peppers		
<b>Cucumber And Roasted Corn Salsa</b>	<i>with</i> Pan-Fried Monkfish Seared Scallops		
<b>Granola</b>	<i>in</i> Sourdough Bread		





## LEFTOVERS DONE RIGHT Omelets

Passengers and friends often ask what I like to cook most. Bread is always my first answer; such simple ingredients, such complex reactions. But bread is a topic for another time. My second choice isn't a specific something to cook, but rather a way of cooking. I love to make dinner from nothing. And by 'nothing' I mean the sort of nothing embodied in the statement, "There's nothing to eat in this house/refrigerator/cupboard." The sort of 'nothing' that has my girls opening up the fridge and standing there cooling off the kitchen while they gaze unfocused into shelves full of mysterious and somehow unapproachable containers of leftovers. There's some of this, a little of that and not much of anything. The little bits of who-knows-what get arranged and rearranged in the refrigerator, but no one is brave enough to figure out how to use them.

I come from a family that was dedicated to using leftovers. My dad took leftovers seriously; he took them to work for lunch during the week and on the weekends, he and my brothers would raid the refrigerator. As the only girl in the family, I had to elbow my way in if I wanted to avoid the dregs. However, while my family honed its hockey-checking skills over leftovers, I have heard more than once from folks that leftovers are boring and "Who wants to have that again anyway?"

For me, leftovers are not about having the same meal again or even for the third time; I think of them as the building block, or a starting point, for an entirely different meal. Leftovers are actually a great way to boost flavor in subsequent meals because they already have flavor built into them. In the same way that soup or chili is even better on the second day, leftovers can be too.

This makes them perfect for use in a quick, weeknight meal of soup, frittata, pasta, quesadillas, pizza or omelets. It's also one of the hardest things to replicate in an actual recipe because we rarely have the same set of leftovers on any given day. That said, this segment is really more of a guide rather than scripture - a tool to help you use a basic recipe and adjust according to what you have on hand.

An omelet is a perfect breakfast meal of course, but it is also very good for dinner – full of protein, quick, elegant, European even. Add a warm baguette and a mixed greens salad dressed with good extra virgin olive oil and fresh lemon juice and you've an easy, nutritious meal in no time flat.

In this recipe I've given the amounts per omelet so that you could cook for a crowd or for one. While there are three variations on a cheese omelet listed here, the point is to use whatever small amounts of leftovers you have hanging around in the refrigerator - up to 4 ounces or 1/4 cup total of chopped ingredients per omelet. Also, it helps to heat the leftovers in a separate pan first so that you aren't cooking the eggs too long while waiting for the cold ingredients to heat up. Leftover roast beef? Make a beef and red onion omelet with feta. Leftover roast chicken? Make a chicken, tomato and scallion omelet. You get the idea. I like my omelets nice and cheesy, but if you prefer a little less, feel free to reduce the amount.

### **Mushroom, Potato and Cheddar Omelet**

*This omelet is perfect for leftover boiled or roasted potatoes from another meal. If you need to cook the pota*



## Basic Waffle Recipe

Makes 10 to 12 waffles

2 cups all-purpose flour  
1/4 cup sugar  
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon salt  
3 eggs, separated  
1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted  
1 3/4 cups buttermilk

Preheat the waffle iron. In a large mixing bowl, sift all dry ingredients. Mix the egg yolks, butter, and buttermilk in a medium bowl. Combine with the dry ingredients. In a separate bowl – one that is clean and dry – beat the egg whites until they form stiff peaks. Fold into the batter, then follow the directions for your waffle iron.

## Lemon Poppy Seed Waffles

*These, if pressed, would have to be my families' favorite, but it's a hard choice to make and one where Lemon Poppy seed doesn't always come out on top. We especially like these with fresh strawberries sprinkled with demerara or turbinado sugar for crunch.*

To the Basic Waffle recipe  
Add: 2 tablespoons poppy seeds  
2 teaspoons lemon zest; about 1 lemon  
6 tablespoons lemon juice; about 1 lemon  
2 teaspoons lemon extract

Add poppy seeds when you're combining the dry ingredients. Add the zest, lemon juice, and lemon extract when you're mixing the egg yolks, butter, and buttermilk.

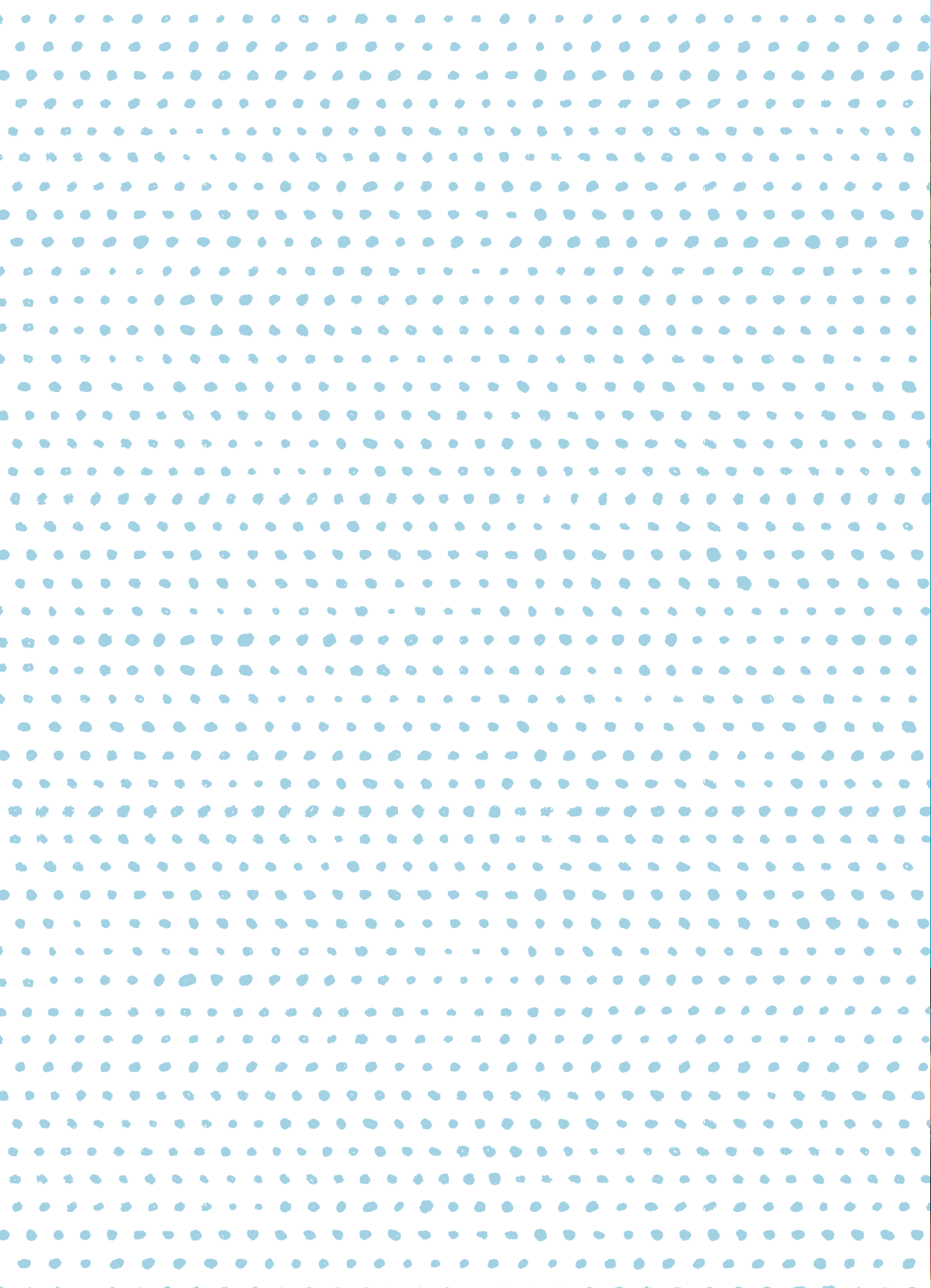
## Coconut, Orange, and Chocolate Waffles

*Served with orange segments (supreme) sprinkled with demerara sugar and toasted coconut on top if you like. Maple syrup is maybe an afterthought here rather than the main event.*

To the Basic Waffle recipe  
Substitute: 1/4 cup lightly packed brown sugar for 1/4 cup sugar  
Add: 2 tablespoons buttermilk







***Sugar & Salt, Book One* is a collection of recipes, crafts, thoughts and stories from an adventurous, hilarious, sometimes frenetic, unique life off the Coast of Maine. Annie Mahle has two kitchens, one a floating restaurant and B&B that sails as a Maine windjammer all summer long, the Schooner *J. & E. Riggin* and the other her home, cooking for their family of four. As much a cookbook as it is a story of a lifestyle that is seasonal and sustainable.**

*J. & E. Riggin*: Named One Of The Top 10 Places to have Dinner With a View in Maine by *Yankee Magazine*

*Dining aboard the J. & E. Riggin ... is both a scenic journey and a culinary getaway. Captain Jon focuses on smooth sailing, while Captain Annie conjures magic below decks.* —Annie B. Copps, *Yankee Magazine*

*While it's the sailing adventure that draws people to a Maine windjammer ... the reason why many of these folks chose this schooner is Annie's cooking.* —Marnie MacLean, *NECN*

*A passionate cook, Mahle's galley on the Riggin has long relied on fresh, local, produce and herbs.* —Lynette L. Walther, *Maine Boats, Homes, & Harbors*

*Mahle, who is also the author of the cookbook At Home, At Sea, is known for her innovative and tasty fare.* —Steve Jermanok, *Boston Globe*

*The Riggin is food for the soul and the senses.* —Carol Stoner, *Traditional Home*

*... a husband-and-wife team known for offering not only a wonderfully scenic journey but also a fabulous culinary experience.* —Michele Bernic, *WeJustGotBack.com*

