

Ratatouille

Ratatouille . . . ratatouille . . .
Just to say it is to find yourself in France!
Some quaint café
On the corner
Of a town no tourist has ever found
In sunny Provence.

Ratatouille . . . ratatouille . . .
So much more than a vegetable stew.
All the goodness of the summer
And the fruit of peasant simplicity
Proffered with love in Provence.

Ratatouille . . . to prepare it
First you take a large skillet . . .

But wait!

We should know more
About the simple
Ingredients that enter our dish.

Ratatouille is like a party
And the better you understand your guests
The more gracious the soiree:

Attending today are tomato and eggplant
And garlic and onion
And fresh green pepper
Accompanied by a green and virgin olive oil.

Ratatouille . . . to prepare it
First you take your large skillet and . . .

Wait!

We must say just a bit
Of the part that each plays.
Ratatouille is a marriage
Of five or six partners . . . how French!

First the eggplant:
What the British
Call aubergine, plump and firm and tight
And utterly satisfying.
We must say no more!
For to dwell at length upon the aubergine
Is to lose oneself in a purple maze of beauty,
Half delicious, half obscene.

Next the tomato:
The fruit of a plant that is cousin
To the deadly belladonna:
She that made so many Spanish eyes
Wide and beautiful.
Tomatoes were thought to be deadly.
Tomatoes were thought to be aphrodisiacs.
And now in our skillet
Danger and love together mix,
The kiss of a promise,
The death of a tryst.
Prefigured in
The roughly cubed and seeded and skinned
Tomato.

Ratatouille . . . to prepare it
Take at last your large skillet and . . .

Wait!

What of garlic?
Use profoundly
As your social conscience allows.
And be sure that the one that you love follows
Step by step
Clove by clove
Bite by bite
Lip next to lip
Through the sharp sweetness
Of each incriminating slip
Of each lovely olive unctious taste.

Ratatouille . . . to prepare it
In a skillet heat oil.

No, wait!

Not just oil.
Not thick Crisco
Or crude oleo.
But the purest most virgin oil you know.
Olive oil!
In each drop
There is captured
An entire sun-taunted Grecian day,
A noon of bright sunlight
Suspended in oil.
Taste the Acropolis,
Savor the blinding Aegean sun
That simmers now in your skillet.

. . . Oh the skillet!

In your skillet
Heat hot oil and add
Each of the ingredients
In their proper order.

Cook until done.

That's it.

Serve with a chilled Blanc de Cassis
ou Rosé de Provence.

BEWARE!

This recipe was written
for the professional kitchen -
with a minimum of guidance.
Please note:
this recipe makes
approximately twenty
gallons of ratatouille.

As with all pleasure
As with all of the good things in life
As with love
As with art
As with song
You must
Adapt accordingly for your own needs.
Ratatouille . . . ratatouille!