

house beautiful

A CENTURY OF STYLE TO INSPIRE YOUR OWN

**DECORATE
FOR THE WAY
YOU LIVE**

5 Inspiring Examples

*Blotts
Copie*

Our Favorite New Furniture

APRIL 1997 \$3.00



0 74851 08458 8

RELISHING SHELLFISH

For 33 years the renowned Ballymaloe House hotel and restaurant in Ireland has stood for food made from the freshest ingredients put together simply. These days lucky visitors, including those at the cooking school, are treated to a feast for the eyes as well as the palate



BY CHRISTOPHER PETKANAS PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAURA RESEN
PRODUCED BY CAROLYN ENGLEFIELD

As anyone from Tokyo to Texas may know, Ballymaloe House, in Shanagarry, forty-five minutes east of Cork, is the mecca of good eating in Ireland. Set in from the coast on 400 acres of barley and sugar beet, Ballymaloe invented the Irish country house hotel-restaurant in the mid-sixties. Some two decades later a cooking school for dabblers and professionals was added to spread the gospel about common-sense food that sings with the flavors of Ireland. Through it all the creed of Ballymaloe's creator, Myrtle Allen, has never wavered: "In the kitchen common practice carries its own authority."

Very often the flavors in Mrs. Allen's kitchen are seaworthy: lobsters, prawns, mussels, crabs, scallops, clams, and periwinkles from Kenmare Bay. Ballymaloe's own exhaustive *potagers* and greenhouses supply the organic vegetables she often pairs with the shellfish for dishes that have nothing to do with fashion, and that put the burden of good taste on the ingredients rather than the cook.

Seeing art in the mountains of shells discarded by the school and restaurant, Darina Allen—one of Mrs. Allen's daughters-in-law, the school's director, and a leading authority on Irish food—built an extravagant garden folly that put them to use. The contrast between the dignified severity of the building, with its slightly forbidding Gothic doorway and windows, and the visual overload of the interior, its every inch covered in wildly intricate shell mosaics, could not be more delicious.

The younger Mrs. Allen's formal herb garden is her "other folly." Taking as her model the mother of all *potagers*, the one attached to the Château de Villandry in France, she filled a disciplined parterre of box-lined beds with lemon balm and bronze fennel, purple sage and lovage, summer savory and sweet cecily. The garden feeds the school. Of course. A strictly decorative garden? For a cook? Never heard of it.

The folly's severe facade (above) offers no clues to the fireworks within.

Opposite above: For hot buttered lobster, the meat is cooked twice. Opposite below:

Crab cakes with hollandaise sauce freshened with cucumber.



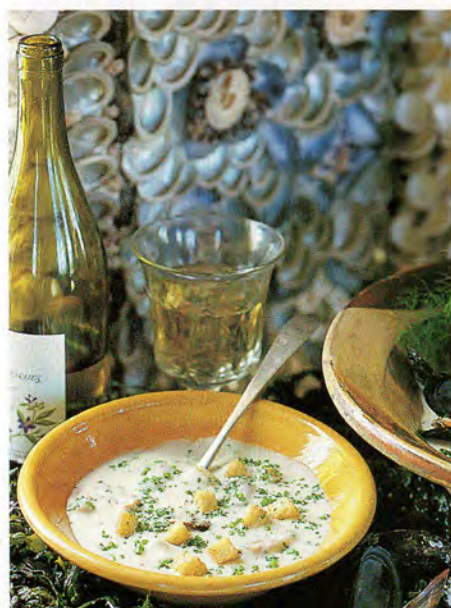


While the folly was under construction, the Ballymaloe House restaurant and cooking school kitchens were instructed to save every last mussel, scallop, clam, and periwinkle shell—or else. Window reveals, sills—nothing escaped the application of shells, shells, and more shells.



A formal garden fashioned by Darina Allen, Ballymaloe's ebullient director, supplies the kitchen with tender, just-picked herbs

Allen planted her herb parterre (above) on the site of a once-neglected 19th-century garden whose only legacy is the beech hedges. Below left: Mussel soup is spiked with curry. Below right: A warm salad brings together scallops, bacon, orange segments, and pine nuts. Opposite above: Brown bread is slathered with mayonnaise, then mounded with the fleshiest Kenmare Bay prawns. Opposite below: Even dessert gets into the shell act—chocolate scallop shells cradle scoops of white-chocolate mousse, raspberries from the restaurant's own berry patch, and sweet geranium leaves.



RECIPES FOLLOW. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE READER INFORMATION