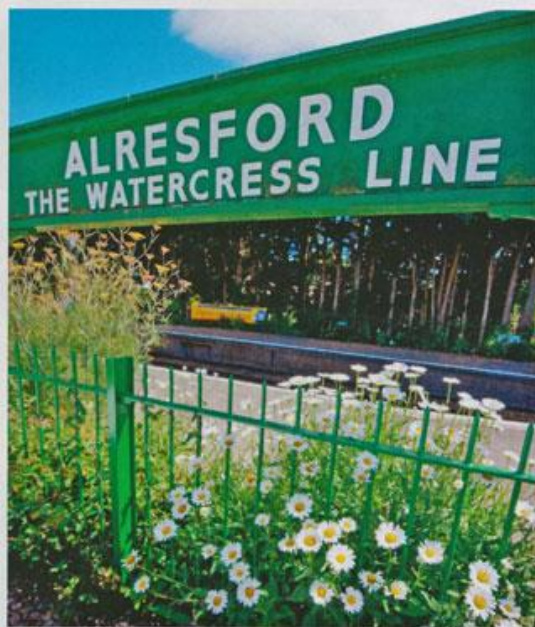


# Lockets savoury



**Gerard Baker**, BBC chef and food historian, celebrates a traditional regional recipe  
Recipe photograph PETER CASSIDY



**Alresford's station on the Watercress Line is a reminder that the town has been the centre of watercress production since the 1860s**

The combination of cheese and fruit is a classic one – the two go together so well that when I've had a hard day in the kitchen, sometimes all I want to eat is a perfectly ripe piece of fruit and a slice of cheese.

And what better cheese to choose than Stilton? A richly flavoured, strong cheese, it can stand up to almost any other flavour. However, I always think that when combining foods, it is better to marry them into harmony rather than force them to stand up to one another. A perfect example is Lockets savoury. The mix of buttery bread, watercress, pear and Stilton is exceptionally good.

Why Lockets? Until recently, Lockets was one of the grand dames of the London restaurant and club scene. Food writer Jane Grigson noted its presence in her book, *The Observer*

*Guide to British Cookery*, and gave the recipe for its famed savoury dish.

As well as the cheese, one of the main ingredients in this dish is watercress, which marries perfectly with the Stilton and pears. Watercress stands out as one of our finest native flavours and I for one am always happy when I see watercress seedlings coming up in my vegetable garden in early spring. The flavour is strong and peppery, even when the vegetable is young, but deepens in the summer as the plant matures, in common with other mustard relatives.

The key to growing good watercress is abundant, clean and mineral-rich water – natural spring water, if possible. This is why Hampshire, which has plenty of it, has become watercress central. Alresford has been the centre of production since 1865, when the railway was finally extended deep into the county – the steam train that now travels that route is even known as the Watercress Line.

Demand from the increasingly industrialised suburbs of London was based in part on the fact that watercress was a winter and early spring vegetable, and was used to cleanse the blood after the winter darkness. Its iron and vitamin-rich leaves are so clearly good for you, it always amazes me that people bother with rocket.

So let's revive this most brilliant of leaves – and while we are at it, revive ourselves for the spring ahead with this lovely recipe.

## Lockets savoury

SERVES 4 • PREP 5 mins •

COOK 10 mins **Easy**

*This charming dish brings together two assertive English flavours – watercress and Stilton – with the calming influence of fragrant pears.*

- 4 slices white country bread
- 50g/2oz butter, softened
- 2 handfuls watercress, thick stalks removed
- 2 large ripe pears, peeled and sliced
- 225g/8oz Stilton cheese, sliced

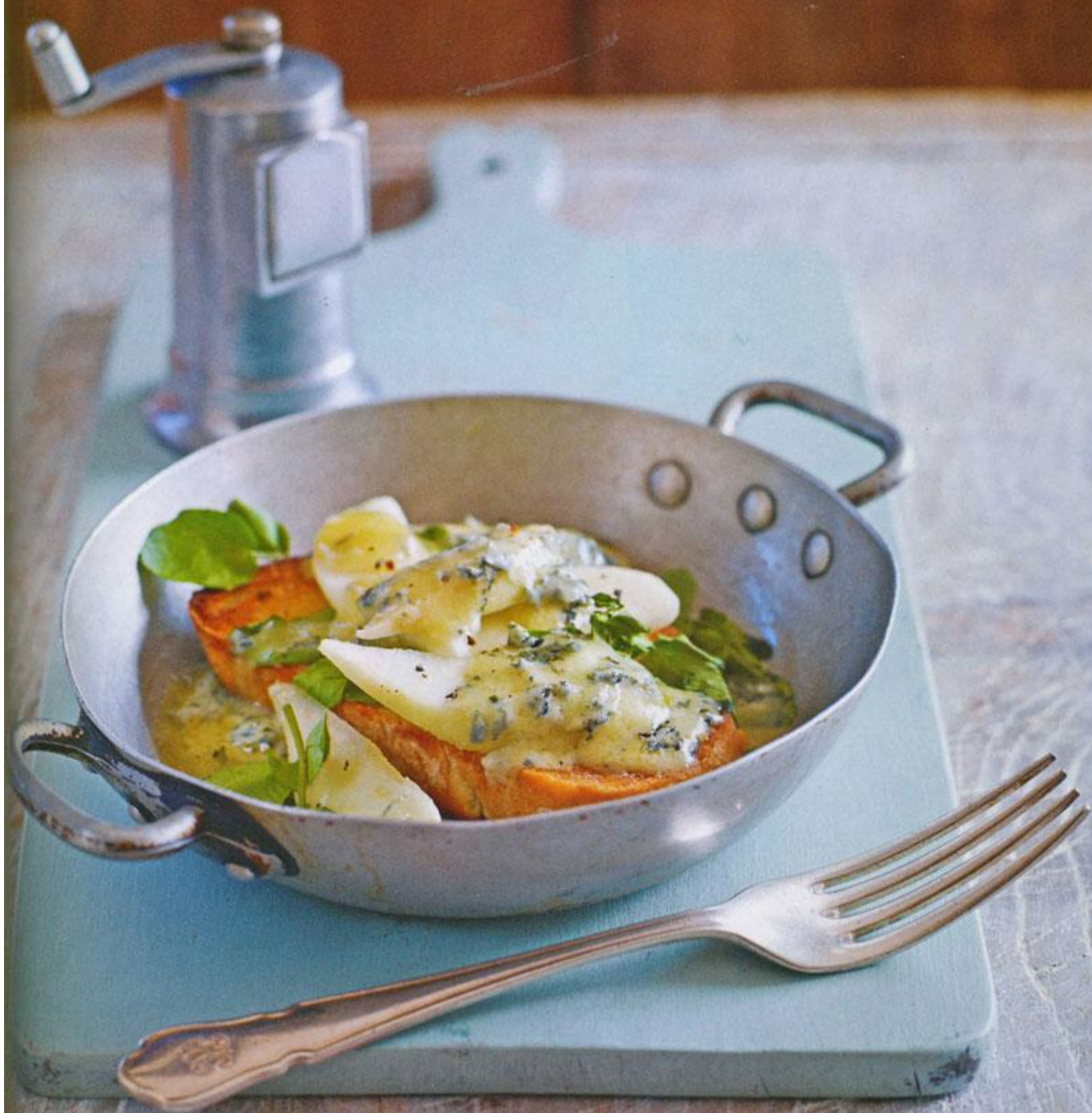
- 1 Heat grill to medium. Toast the slices of bread until light golden, then butter them. Butter four shallow gratin dishes and lay a slice of toasted bread in each.
- 2 Divide the watercress between the dishes and top with slices of the peeled pears. Top with Stilton and place the dishes under the grill until the cheese melts and bubbles slightly. This is lovely served with a glass of crisp Chenin from the Loire.

PER SERVING 474 kcals, protein 18g, carbs 32g, fat 31g, sat fat 19g, fibre 3g, sugar 11g, salt 1.92g



• Catch Gerard Baker on the new series of BBC Two's *Hairy Bikers: Mums Know Best*. He also appears on BBC Radio 4's *The Food Programme*.

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A quick lunch or light supper