

Rigatoni

Newsflash: England has good food these days. This is not yet well known on the Continent. The kingdom's long-standing reputation for terrible cooking is still out there. Many of my students, for example, are surprised to hear of the excellent nosh to be found both in London and in the provinces. It is not all fish and chips and bacon, eggs, sausages, baked beans and fried bread. Delicious as these dishes are, especially before or after a couple of pints of best bitter, England's menus today offer much more.

After many years of living with immigrants the English now take all sorts of once-exotic cuisines for granted. A samosa is as English as a pasty. And what would Saturday night be without tandoori? And pasta. I bet the English now eat as much rigatoni as the Italians. This is what a couple of generations of close contact with the dreaded Europeans has done to the English. All those vacations on Mallorca, all those holiday homes in Tuscany, the Algarve and Provence. The food they found in these places was so yummy they wanted to be able to eat it year round. The supermarkets were happy to oblige and today euro-grub can be found nearly everywhere in the realm.

Thus, at the M&S Gatwick Airport shop I was able to buy six "chorizo sausages", described as "deliciously spiced" (they were). What's more they were made from "British outdoor bred" pork. In case you missed the point the label also made clear that this was "pork from trusted British farms". No Johnny-foreigner *porc* or *Schweinefleisch* in these loyal bangers.

American sausages with the Stars and Stripes on them are commonplace but I can't recall ever seeing anything about trusted American agribusiness. Perhaps because this would be an oxymoron.

Trusted Britannic pig meat with continental spicing and a Spanish monicker is a new patriotic recipe for me. I like it. Summed up in a sausage is Blighty's awkward relationship with the club it never really wanted to join.

I hope Britain doesn't leave the EU because I would hate to have to pay duty on my deliciously-spiced-British-outdoor-bred pork. We would end up in the situation that now prevails between Canada and the USA. A band of cheese smugglers were arrested in Ontario recently and charged with the illicit importation of a large amount of Stars and Stripes cheese. Maple Leaf cheese is more expensive than American cheese and this leads to contraband cheddar. Can those body scanners see when your paunch is mostly a dozen outdoor-bred chorizos?