COOKING UNDER THE STARS

w&h's astrologer Penny Thornton reveals how your star sign can affect what you eat, how you cook – and even your temperament in the kitchen...

PENNY THORNTON learned how to cook at around the same time she was taking astrology classes. Back in the late 1970s, her then-husband was a sous-chef at London's Dorchester Hotel. Then in the mid-90s, Penny, who was living in the US, had a ten-minute daily slot on the Food Network, combining astrology and food.

As Penny explains, "The relationship between astrology and food is based on the ancient belief that all things in the universe are connected. Animals, birds, fish and plants were all 'ruled' by a planet or sign."

Penny's new book, *The Zodiac Cooks*, embraces her two passions. It's an amusing and informative gastronomic romp through the zodiac alongside delicious recipes. So read on to find out whether you really are suited to spelt...

Perfect for Pisces: The traditional French stew of Bouillabaisse with a hot paste of rouille served on slices of crusy baguette. Find these recipes and others from Penny's book at womanandhome.com

A dream dish for Virgos: Make the most of early autumn fruits with a blackberry and plum pavlova

Serve this for Scorpios: beetroot and vodka-cured salmon with a zesty citrus salad

ARIES

21 March–20 April A fearless, competitive and pioneering sign that displays courage, confidence and a degree of naivety in the kitchen, Aries has scant regard for rules, prefers to go it alone and takes advice from no one.

✢ CELESTIAL SUPER-FOODS Spiky, spicy, hot and generally fierce. Meats include lamb and venison, artichokes and rocket are right up Aries' street, as are oats and red lentils.

✢ WHAT TO DO IN THE ARIES KITCHEN Open a bottle and stand well clear of the stove and the chopping board. Anything could happen!

TAURUS

21 April–21 May

Earthy Taurians crave stability and consistency – while simultaneously being prone to hedonism (including indulging in anything sweet).

✢ **Celestial super-foods** All dairy, sweet and juicy fruits such as peaches, plums and figs, and lots of beans. As for meats, aim for rabbit, veal, beef; and for fish, include salmon, lobster and sardines.

✢ **What to do in the Taurus kitchen** Forget your Spanx and your calorie counter.

GEMINI

22 May–22 June **Gemini is the multi-personality of the zodiac. They are complicated people with a suitably complicated palate and a delicate constitution. They also need to be informed and like to educate.**

✢ **Celestial super-foods** The fruits and nuts of this sign are few and far between, but include mulberry, hazelnut and walnut. For veg and herbs, think fennel, turnip and parsley. And swordfish goes down well.

✢ **What to do in Gemini's kitchen** Share a new app you have, as well as any juicy gossip, but under no circumstances should you invade your host's personal space.

CANCER

23 June–23 July **Cancerians are the archetypal home cooks – think nostalgia and food as a means of nurture and emotional sustenance.**

✢ **Celestial super-foods** Foods high in calcium fluoride: egg yolk, wholegrain rye, yogurt, beetroot, fish and oysters.

✢ **What to do in the Cancerian kitchen** Talk about your woes, praise the authenticity of everything – and request a recipe, hand-written, of course.

LEO

24 July–23 August **By and large, Leos are sunny creatures but they have a dark underbelly. Extreme measures are doomed to failure, and Leo is the poster child for yo-yo dieting.**

✢ **Celestial super-foods** All things yellow, orange and gold: carrots, mangoes, corn, oranges, lemons, bananas, turmeric. By and large, Leos are not fish lovers.

✢ **What to do in the Leo kitchen** Arrive with a great gift and remember to leave before you're asked.

VIRGO

24 August–22 September

Virgos are the fusspots of the zodiac – but within every dutiful, responsible and restrained Virgo is a sybarite trying to get out.

✢ **Celestial super-foods** Natural, unrefined foods, wholegrains, pulses, nuts and seeds. In particular fennel, sweetcorn, leafy greens, celery, beans and berries. But although they may wax lyrical about the virtues of spelt, they will go weak-kneed at the sight of sticky toffee pudding.

✢ **What to do in the Virgo kitchen** Bring some natural lotions and potions as a gift, and look presentable but not overdone – for a Virgo, less is more.

LIBRA

23 September–23 October

With Librans, the appearance of things, whether on a plate or in life, has to be appealing because of their innate sense of harmony.

✢ CELESTIAL SUPER-FOODS Dairy, juicy fruits and foods with aphrodisiacal properties, such as asparagus and oysters, tomatoes, parsnips, oregano and parsley. Librans also love all things sweet.

✢ WHAT TO DO IN THE LIBRAN KITCHEN Despite being sociable people, Librans are hard to please. So come laden with flowers or chocolates, preferably in a heart shape.

SAGITTARIUS

23 November–22 December

Sagittarians have a taste for the expensive and the exotic, and delight in foods from different parts of the world.

✢ **Celestial super-foods** It's all about taste. Especially popular is pheasant, lamb, turbot, tuna and all fruits and seeds, particularly sesame seeds and almonds.

✢ **What to do in the Sagittarius kitchen** You'll have a good time with Sagittarians, the fun bunnies of the zodiac. So bring some bubbles and laugh, no matter how many times you've heard the same story...

CAPRICORN

23 December–19 January

Capricorns are reliable, practical and exacting. They are the observers in a room. And this understated, methodical approach is reflected in their cooking.

✢ **Celestial super-foods** Produce that flourishes in northern countries: potatoes, root vegetables – particularly parsnips – lentils, blackberries, mussels and crayfish, for instance, as well as blue cheese and game.

✢ **What to do in the Capricorn kitchen** Follow any instructions and ask whether your host has any tips on saving money or conserving energy.

SCORPIO

24 October–22 November Their passion and resourcefulness is legendary, and if you want a snapshot of Scorpio in the kitchen, think Gordon Ramsay! They can take or leave alcohol but for the purposes of sensory exploration, they usually take it.

✢ CELESTIAL SUPER-FOODS This sign rules orchards, vineyards and anything caught deep in the ocean, as well as things grown in dark, damp places, such as mushrooms, truffles and root vegetables. They tend to prefer fish to meat.

✢ WHAT TO DO IN THE SCORPIO KITCHEN For a Scorpio get-together to pass without incident, keep a low profile, and insist on doing the washing-up.

AQUARIUS

20 January–19 February **Talk about complex. Aquarians come in two sizes – the traditionalist and the rule-breaker – sometimes the two exist in one person. Meat and two veg one day, an Earl Grey soufflé with chocolate sauce the next.**

✢ **Celestial super-foods** Foods that are light: soufflés, syllabubs, mousses and meringues; also, air-dried meats, salt cod, root vegetables, sage, garlic and capers.

✢ **What to do in the Aquarius kitchen** Enquire where your chef first tasted the dish they're making – Aquarians love story-telling – but never assert your superiority.

PISCES

20 February–20 March

Pisceans have a feel for food and an instinctive sense of what makes a great dish. They can be diligent foragers and are brilliant with leftovers.

✢ **Celestial super-foods** All seafood. Leaning toward a vegetarian or vegan diet, you can include most fruits and vegetables, but especially bilberries, asparagus, endive and leek.

✢ **What to do in the Pisces kitchen** Say that you don't mind when – and what – you eat. Just don't open the wine too soon or dinner may never happen...

The Zodiac Cooks *by Penny Thornton (GBPublishing.org, £29.99) is out on 28 September* w&h

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