

# Christmas

## Stirring tales

Giles MacDonogh samples the best of the season's cook books

Another Christmas brings in another batch of books accompanying this and that series on the small screen. They leave me cold. TV chef books are not really cookery books in the accepted sense, more souvenirs of a few happy hours viewing. Nor are "chef books" much better. Restaurant cooking and home cooking are two different animals; the one is performed by a battery of trained practitioners, the other by a talented, or ham-fisted amateur. Attempts to recreate a stellar dish by dragooning in a husband, a dog and an au pair are very likely doomed to failure, and

of Bailey's Irish Cream and peach liqueur. Cookery books are best left to cookery writers.

The season's - literal - blockbuster is the Larousse Gastronomique (Hamlyn £60 / Clarkson Potter \$75), a lovely book to own, and a great source of reference, principally for French recipes. Its 1,300 odd pages are lavishly, if conventionally illustrated and some of the recipes have excellent step-by-step guides. How much it is an improvement on the last - or even the great 1938 Prosper Montagné - edition is a moot point, however: many of the entries are unchanged and in

is not: it has a fun design and the yellow like egg stains. It teases and provides the belles mères, those great chefs who carved a nation for themselves, world, chiefly in France, economic capital, Lyons; Anna del Conte's of Italy (Pavilion) another solid and whettable book. It also has an excellent glossary of terms and techniques hours looking at it

### RUNNING WITH THE FT

## Heavy breathing on a trade crusade

Pascal Lamy, the workaholic EU trade commissioner, maintains a frugal and disciplined daily routine. Leo Cendrowicz tries to keep pace with him

Pascal Lamy is a lousy candidate for lunch with the FT. The European Union's trade commissioner espouses spartan values inside and outside the office. Despite a professed taste for rich cheeses, chocolate and wine (Château Margaux 1947 is his favourite), his appetite is only really whetted when he talks about bread.

"I'm a big bread fan," he says. "I never skip a meal. If I don't have time I eat brown bread. And you can find bread, or the equivalent of bread, anywhere in the world. Yesterday, for instance, I had this meeting in Luxembourg and I came back at lunchtime and had some bread in the car - five or six slices."

So, instead of lunch, we decide on "Running with the FT". It also fits in neatly with his schedule: even by his own workaholic standards, the 54-year-old Frenchman has been exceptionally busy.

He was recently in Doha, capital of the Gulf state of Qatar, where he cajoled the rest of the world to sign up to an ambitious plan for global trade negotiations. At least he went well armed: as chief of staff to former European Commission president Jacques Delors for a decade, he gained a terrifying reputation. He was once dubbed "Delors' Exocet" - a reference to the French-made missile used to devastating effect by the Argentines in the Falklands war.

Running also allows the wiry Lamy to regain his perspective as he pounds the dirt tracks of his local park near the heart of Brussels' European quarter.

"It's either a meditation or a review of things coming, and the way I should handle them," he says between carefully modulated breaths. "Lots of people say that running is boring, which is basically true - if you don't have something in mind."

So is being interviewed messing up his routine?

He laughs - a rare spark of humanity. "I can do some time-sharing," he says with a

generous smile. "I'm not totally a machine."

In the past, he has been described as an autocrat and a bully: during his decade with Delors he was likened to some of Europe's most notorious historical figures - Louis XIV's finance minister Colbert, the Spanish Inquisition's Torquemada, as well as Machiavelli, the Florentine *consigliere* whose name became synonymous with duplicitous political manoeuvring and a man to whom Lamy bears a strong physical resemblance.

Yet no one ever doubted his intelligence, industry and application. Now, his sights are trained on targets outside Brussels and officials are happy to hail him as one of the brightest stars. He has been lauded as a knight riding with messianic zeal to the far reaches of the globe to see a new round of world trade talks launched. Within the Commission, the loudest criticism comes from officials unable to decipher the instructions contained in his tiny *pattes de mouche* scrawl.

The Doha meeting of the World Trade Organisation was hailed as a success in agreeing a fresh

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round of global trade talks. But two years ago at the last WTO ministerial gathering in Seattle, Lamy, trade commissioner for just two months, arrived in a city under siege by anti-globalisation protesters.

Ignoring Molotov cocktails, tear-gas and curfews, he ploughed on, but inside the Seattle conference centre, the WTO meeting was equally chaotic. Lamy left determined to tackle what he called the organisation's "medieval" decision-making process.

Since then, he has addressed

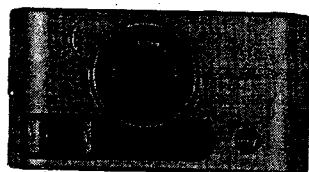
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my point of view



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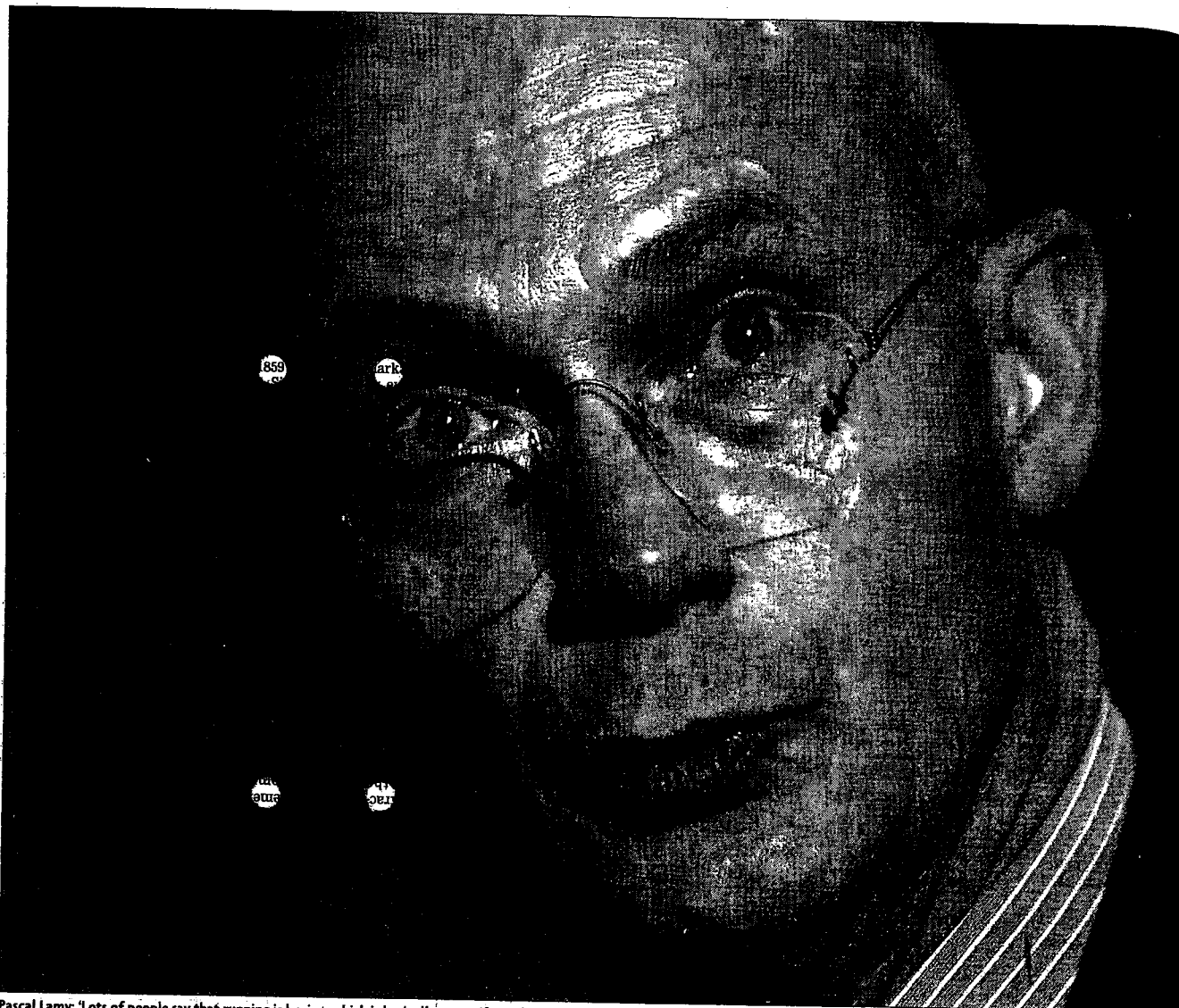
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Can a moment  
last a lifetime?

Next year, Nîmes celebrates its 80th anniversary of bullfighting. Beizers has been hosting them since about the same time. Its arena was built to stage operas but the organisers found it easier to sell tickets to bullfights.  
The arena in Nîmes is the most beautiful setting for a bullfight in southern France, being shaped like a rugby ball so that spectators can be close to the action. If you find it all too gruesome, you can look away and admire the architecture - or the crowd.  
A typical crowd in Nîmes is made up of old Spanish men with fewer teeth than the bull has horns, drawing on cigars and making acerbic comments.  
But there are also families, with young children and babies, and a considerable number of attractive single women, dressed more as if they were going to a concert than a bullfight. They are presumably drawn by the drama and thrill of of watching a bullfighter at close quarters.  
Traditional bullfighting, although it ends with the death of the bull, is a closer contest than most people imagine. In each of the two fights I have witnessed, the matadors have been knocked to the ground. Sebastian Castella lost his slippers, but suffered no more damage than loss of face. Richard Millan, in his last fight in Nîmes, was knocked down in the first few minutes by a 500kg bull, and never really recovered his composure. Bullfighting is cruel, but it is a wonderful spectacle, and it is honest. As one Frenchman said, sitting next to me in Nîmes: "What I love about bullfighting is that there is no cheating, no trickery. It is not like football."

# PERSPECTIVES



Pascal Lamy: 'Lots of people say that running is boring, which is basically true – if you don't have something in mind'

Thomas Coles/AR

two of the issues that bedevilled the Seattle meeting. First, he realised that, with WTO decisions taken by consensus, it was essential to win the support of developing nations, which make up two-thirds of the membership. He travelled the globe telling the world's poorer nations that trade could be their friend and that opening up to foreign products could generate wealth and boost living standards all round.

Second, he listened to the concerns of different strands in the

how coherent it is with our economic and social system." He would also probe the so-called "guilt business" where people in advanced societies are getting richer, older, and have a lot of available time.

"It's quite a natural thing that – at least in our Judeo-Christian civilisation – there is a lot of guilt in our system to be tapped. NGOs are doing this in a way more effectively than parties, unions and churches. There is a race for market share in the guilt

inspired by American examples. His position now, he admits, is close to that of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, although he adds that political labels generally travel badly.

Lamy insists most of his own values have remained consistent since he was a student. Although he was – and remains – politically active on France's left, he never joined the student riots in Paris in 1968, preferring to change the rules from the inside.

And even his first political position as a ministerial aide in the early 1980s saw him offering pragmatic advice to adapt to the world economy rather than prescribing the more fundamentalist line that many of his French Socialist colleagues urged. "I had a rational view and analysis," he said. "The idea that trade should be more connected as a policy was already there."

Lamy's own journey took him through France's top schools and into politics. After serving in the Finance Ministry, he joined the cabinet in which Delors was finance minister in 1983, before being poached by Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy, and then rejoining Delors in Brussels.

As well as gaining a reputation as an intellectual bully, during his first stint in Brussels, Lamy was accused of bending rules to

get his way in the Commission.

A multi-million euro fine for French dairy products company Fléchar was allegedly slashed after he intervened personally. But earlier this year, a report on the case by the EU's anti-fraud office failed to uncover any damning evidence pointing directly to Lamy.

There were further accusations that Lamy used his Commission contacts when he left the Delors cabinet in 1994 to join ailing French bank Crédit Lyonnais. What is not in doubt, though, is that he helped forge the strategy that would revive Crédit Lyonnais' fortunes and pave the way for its privatisation.

France is arguably the most protectionist member of the EU, and Lamy's appointment in 1999 as trade commissioner astonished many onlookers. Others saw it as a shrewd move, as a Frenchman would be ideally placed to convince Paris of the need to accept market-opening initiatives.

As our workout in the park grinds on, the commissioner recalls his first stint in Brussels, when he lived in the smart suburb of Rhode St Genese, near his beloved Fort de Salignes.

His passion for running began at business school when he joined the long-distance relay team, occasionally winning local

competitions. He is honest enough to admit that his best time for a marathon is an unremarkable 3 hours 20 minutes – 50 minutes slower than the personal best of his friend and opposite number in Washington, US trade representative Robert Zoellick.

And he confesses to crankiness if he breaks the daily running routine. "The problem is that, if you are really trained to do this, it becomes a must. And if you don't do it, it becomes a problem. It can be an addiction," he says.

"I like to run wherever I am. Sometimes it's the only chance I have to see where I am. It makes a huge difference if you can look at the streets instead of staying locked in a hotel."

His frugal ethos has affected his immediate career in French politics: he performed abysmally in the French elections in 1993, coming third when he stood for the Socialist party in his home base of Eure in Normandy.

But he could be promoted anyway: if Lionel Jospin, the French prime minister, wins the presidential elections next year, Lamy is a hot tip to be summoned back to Paris to head a new government. But, if he does swap his trade crusade for Gallic glory, don't expect him to celebrate with lavish banquets at the Matignon.

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anti-globalisation movement. They raised good questions, he said, but had the wrong answers.

Lamy instead asks for doubters to engage in the process: globalisation is not by definition beneficial, but, working together, he believes we can control it and enjoy what he calls "globalisation *maitrisée*" (controlled globalisation).

"I am very interested in this," he says, mulling the growing impact of non-governmental organisations. "I think if I had a six-month sabbatical, I would write a book about NGOs, about

business, which is very interesting."

But Lamy's antennae have long been keenly attuned to global political trends, something that distinguishes him from many of his colleagues in the French Socialist party. Although a fierce debater, he has always been cosmopolitan in outlook and receptive to new ideas.

Twenty years ago, when he began his political career, much of the French left defined itself in terms of its antipathy towards the US, but Lamy consistently argued for market solutions