

Gizzi's Feline Feast

Words: Gemma Lacey
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She's famous for accessorising her chef's hat with the perfect cat's eye, but outside of the kitchen Gizzi's real love is her cat Kimchi. We sit down to chat Korean food, Aleister Crowley and of course what's on the menu for the fussiest feline this year.





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We hear you worked as body piercer before becoming a chef, how did you make that transition from your punk sensibilities to purveyor of fine food?

GE: Music is a big part of my style and I love that rock'n'roll and punk attitude. When I got into cooking I trained at Leiths, but my approach is still informed by that. I'm a chef not a cook, my background is in restaurants and I like doing the boys stuff, that twee approach just isn't me.

What would you say is your signature dish?

GE: I always find this so hard, I guess I'm known for Korean fried chicken which I do at most of my events. If I'm cooking socially it's quite simple, some kind of roast or braise. I write over 400 recipes a year and have to test them all, so as a whole I don't have the opportunity to cook the same dish more than once.

You must cook for a lot of interesting people...

GE: Oh yeah, I've cooked for Boy George, Adam Ant and loads of people like that. The Libertines all at one dinner party with The Kooks, that was insane.

Do you have a cooking playlist?

GE: The Sonics are one of my favourite bands so I can always listen to them, my favourite track is probably *Psycho-Sonic* or *Strychnine*. I also like Harry Belafonte's *Jump in Line*. A good cooking song is *Angelina* by Louis Prima, it's about a waitress and also food so it's very topical.

Who would be your dream dinner party guests?

GE: I love weird shit and dark arts, so Aleister Crowley. Obviously he's totally nuts, but I do like something about him and how he challenged things in the '60s. A lot of his prophecies have come true. I know he preached the devil, but he was focused on hedonism really. I love Dan Brown, because he's researched a lot of stuff I'm interested in, like the Illuminati, religion and Kabbalah. I'm obsessed with Anthony Bourdain too, I would love to hang out with him and wax lyrical on things. Finally Keith Floyd, I think he'd be a right laugh and we've got a similar philosophy on wild food.

PUSS PUSS

You're well known for your style and your tattoos are a big part of that. Do you have any cat tattoos?

GE: I really want a cat tattoo. I'm just about to get matching lions with my sister as we're both Leos, so I'll have the big cat one covered. I'd love a really small cat tattoo as well, either behind my ear or somewhere discreet. I think more people are getting cat tattoos now, it's become more popular. Artists like Liam Sparkes have done a lot in that way.

Were you always a cat person and did you have cats growing up?

GE: I wasn't really allowed pets growing up. We lived in a townhouse in central London and my Mum wouldn't let me. All I ever wanted was a cat, that was a dream. Then the year before last I thought, "I really want one and now I can make this decision for myself".

How did Kimchi come to find a home with you?

GE: She was a happy accident. I saw some kittens on the Jonathan Ross Show and I was like, "Those are the ones I want!". When I got her, she was kind of the runt of the litter and not that cute compared to the other kittens, but ended up growing up to be better looking within about a month, she was just a bit of an ugly duckling. She's always been the nicest cat though. She's never scratchy and doesn't mind being picked up. She's better left to herself, but she does like attention and loves women. A lot of female cats like boys, but she loves hanging out with the girls.



Would you say Kimchi is a fussy eater?

GE: She won't eat anything unless it's proper meat, loves human food and will steal it off our plate if we're not looking. She loves anything crunchy, so if there are poppadoms or tortilla chips around that's it. I don't like her having it as they're not supposed to, but she just takes it. It's not my influence at all, she's just a pig. We've had to put her on a diet she was getting so fat. When I make taramasalata she'll eat and eat and eat it, it's her death row dish. She loves cheese, caviar and anything really fishy. Dreamies for a treat, which she's obsessed with, so we have to chill her out on them. It's insane, she purrs as she eats and she doesn't do that normally.

There has recently been a new addition to your cat family. Please tell us about Ponzu and how is Kimchi finding it having to share your attention and her food?

GE: Ponzu is full of bravado while Kimchi is so wary of him. He is a little piglet and wants to eat all the time. A week into having him, after tidying up a Thai take away and leaving the room for 2 minutes, I came back to find him paw deep in green curry! He is obsessed by Kimchi and she is beginning to tolerate him after a fractious beginning, so I think they are becoming friends.

It's fitting that both your cats have unusual and food related names, where did they come from?

GE: Kimchi is called Kimchi because of my love of Korean food and as for Ponzu, I thought for ages about that but Ponzu (which is a Japanese dressing) was my first choice. I was also thinking about neeps or haggis as he's Scottish, but it didn't suit him, so eventually I just went with what suited him best. He was nameless for a week.

Finally, how much help are your cats in the kitchen? Does Kimchi make a good sous chef?

GE: Ha ha no, she's absolutely useless as she'd just be eating all the food. I always pretend that if she had a career, she'd be a showgirl in Vegas.



Gizzi is wearing a dress by Emilio de la Morena available at Matches

Styling by Sinead McKeefry @ Frank Agency — Assistant stylist Jessica McCagie

Make Up: Sophie Everett using Tom Ford — Hair: Kim Roy @ One Represents — Food Stylist assistant: Ivan Icrá Salicru

Special thanks to Princesses D'Isembourg for the caviar tins and mother of pearl spoons