

## BOOKS

## FOOD &amp; DRINK

# SPOTTING A GREAT AUTHOR

AS a nation which has become increasingly concerned with children's literacy, it's a comfort to know certain characters are still introducing young children to the world of books.

One such character is Spot the Dog, who bounded into the world 30 years ago in a breakthrough "lift the flap" format and is a national treasure, appearing in the 30th anniversary edition of *Where's Spot?*, published this month.

Today, the Spot series for pre-school children has sold more than 10 million copies worldwide, been published in more than 25 languages and branched out into television animation and merchandise. He even has his own website.

When Spot's creator Eric Hill – pictured below – now 82, received the OBE last year for services to children's literature, he recalled that Spot, created in 1980, kept the Prince of Wales's children's book *The Old Man Of Lochnagar* off the number one slot.

"I was expecting to go for the chop, but he was very forgiving," the jovial author laughs. "The Prince said he remembered the books because his children read them when they were babies. But I thought it wasn't the time or the place to mention his book."

Spot was created while Hill was living in London and working as a freelance designer and illustrator.

"I was experimenting with a flap idea and my son Christopher, who was about two, came in and I showed him a funny drawing of a man with a bowler hat on, but the arms were the flaps so he could actually remove the hat from his head. A great big smile appeared on Christopher's face and he said, 'Do it again!'"

He then set to work making up a story for his son involving a little dog playing hide and seek with his mother in the house. Spot was born.

However, Hill never intended for it to become a book. It was only when he mentioned it to a friend in London, who knew a literary agent and introduced them, that Spot as we know him was created. The first book became a bestseller and the rest is history.

Hill had a long career in design and advertising before Spot was born. At 16 he joined an art studio, where he was encouraged to draw cartoons in his spare time. He enjoyed drawing aircraft, and it was the markings of planes that later came to influence the design of Spot, reflected in the spots on his body and his tail.

"Spot is not just a children's book, it's a design book. Flaps were unheard of when I did the first one, with the use of large black type with few words on a page. It was all a matter of design.

"The roundel (circular shape) of a Spitfire is the roundel on Spot's body and his tail tip is the tail of a fighter plane."

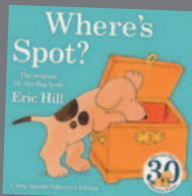
Once his idea is formed, he does an outline with an Indian ink pen, before using coloured inks to complete the illustration.

"The success of Spot put me on a path which, curiously enough, I realised I was made for. I now know this is what I was meant to do. I was over 50 when that happened. I'd already had a lifetime in advertising and design and did OK, but then the whole thing changed."

After Spot was created, Hill and wife Gillian, an artist, sought a more adventurous life in America, where they lived for more than 20 years.

Hill has always been a dog person, and has taken in stray animals.

"I believe that sometimes animals are placed there expressly for you. You've just got to find them."



# Impress your guests with classy canapes

By LIZ LAMB

**IF you love entertaining and haven't been put off by the stress of the festivities, then it's important to always have a recipe for tasty canapes to hand.**

We asked Pierre Rigother, head chef at Jesmond Dene House Hotel, Newcastle, to come up with two recipes that will wow your guests but can easily be created at home in the kitchen.

They are also pretty quick to put together, meaning you'll have more time to enjoy with your guests.

## SMOKED SALMON TOAST, QUAIL EGG, CREAM CHEESE AND CHIVES

### INGREDIENTS:

Salmon mousse  
100g smoked salmon  
100g cream cheese  
1 baguette  
50ml olive oil  
5 quail eggs

### METHOD:

- Blitz smoked salmon with cream cheese until smooth. Season with white pepper.
  - Put this mix in a piping bag.
  - Slice the baguette, put on a tray with some baking parchments, drizzle some olive oil and cover with a tray.
  - Cook in the oven for 10 minutes at 180C until the bread is golden and crispy.
  - Cook the eggs for two minutes in salted boiling water.
  - Chill in iced water straight away.
  - When cold, peel the eggs and keep in water to maintain the shape.
- To make the canape:

- Pipe the salmon mousse on to the toast.
- Add a sliver of smoked salmon, half of the quail egg and a sprig of chive.

## RED DUKE OF YORK POTATO WAFFLE, AVRUGA CAVIAR AND CREME FRAICHE

### INGREDIENTS:

300g red Duke of York potatoes  
1 egg  
1 egg yolk  
100g cream fraiche

### METHOD:

- Peel the potatoes and then grate.
- Press to remove the excess water.
- Season with salt, pepper and add the egg, egg yolk, cream fraiche and mix well.
- Cook in a waffle maker until crispy.

### INGREDIENTS:

1 hard boiled egg  
¼ bunch chives  
50g avruga caviar  
200g creme fraiche

### METHOD:

- Chop egg and chives. With a teaspoon, take a scoop of creme fraiche and season with chopped egg and chives. Serve on waffle with small helping of caviar.



TASTY: Cream cheese and smoked salmon on wholemeal bread. Left, Pierre Rigother.



# CABINET'S SAUVIGNON

By MIKE KELLY

THERE'S a lot been made of the Government's wine cellar, which has an estimated worth of around £800,000.

With no sense of irony, the Tories have been asking some pointed questions about it. The point being that it's wrong as the country is going through a time of great economic hardship.

There are 39,500 bottles of wine contained in it, probably just enough liquid to fill a recently-cleaned moat.

Personally, I'd rather see our taxes go on a few good bottles of claret. My one caveat is that, every now and then, they'd let us peeps in and have a sip. That's not going to happen unless you are a head of state or some dictator from an oil-rich protectorate where booze is, of course, outlawed. Ironies abound.

For a fleeting moment, I kind of wished booze was banned here as I and a volatile member of my family came nose to nose at our annual festive get

together. I can't really remember what the row was about. Well, I can but it's personal, however, suffice to say, we'll both give it a while before venturing into the same room again – probably next Christmas, and we'll be off again.

By that time, a lot more wine will have run under the moat bridge, starting this week with a few from M&S.

The Margaret River Cabernet Shiraz was, apparently, a bronze medal winner at the Decanter awards, the well-respected wine magazine, who should really know their stuff. And, as it turns out, they did.

and smooth with ripe, red fruit flavours, hints of clove and vanilla, it is a good winter-warming red at £7.99.

Then there was the Burra Brook Chardonnay, which transported me to a warmer climate and much-needed distraction from the perilous footpaths of the North (don't councils grit footpaths anymore?).

This was sunshine in a glass, with gorgeous summer fruits – somewhere between melon and pineapple. It was also bursting with dense oak which clung satisfyingly to my throat and had a touch of vanilla.

A good quality white at a reasonable price of £6.49.

Finally, the Crozes Hermitage. More subtle than the above Cabernet Shiraz, it is medium bodied with black berry flavours, a bit of spice and black pepper.

It's one that grows on you as you drink it, as it should, priced at £8.99.



Nice