A tasteful collection



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courtesy of Paola Trifiró

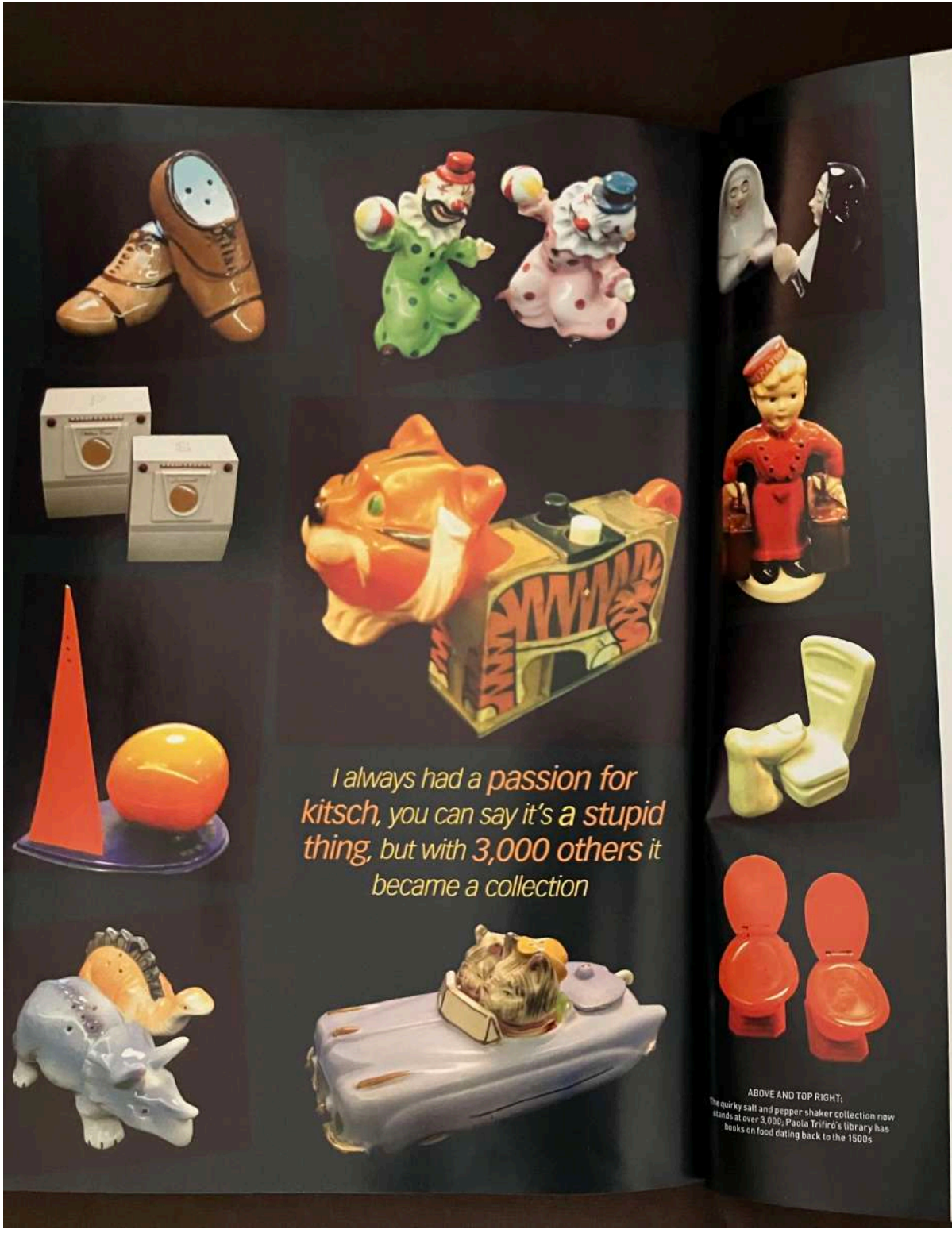
Paola Trifiró is a passionate collector and her cookery book collection has reached 4,000, while she also collects quirky salt and pepper shakers. Just as well she has a hypermodern Milan apartment to display them in...

Paola Trifiró and her husband Salvatore are famous for their beautiful 50-metre Dubois racing sloop, Zefira. But Paola is almost as famously passionate about food, and loves to entertain, at home and onboard. 'I've always thought that cookery was an art and in recent times I find that I'm in good company,' she tells me. 'Of course, having such a passion doesn't mean that you cook well. But I've had the chance to assist some famous chefs, with two or three Michelin stars, and I have studied and learned a lot.'

'When I am onboard Zefira there are some limits,' she explains, 'even in the large, very well equipped kitchen I have onboard. But the spirit of cooking is always the same; find the best food on the market wherever you are, and enjoy what the country offers. I appreciate Chinese cookery, but also the Japanese; I admire French and Italian food and chefs; I also manage to enjoy North American food, despite the widespread European opinion of it! At home, my cookery is quite eclectic, but mostly European and Mediterranean with a touch of Italian style in French recipes, and vice versa. And ultimately, the old recipes of grandmother are always the best: a superb ossobuco con risotto or spaghetti al dente with ragù or tortellini in a real meat stock...'

There is more evidence of her passion carefully curated in her hypermodern penthouse apartment in an ancient 17th century house in the centre of Milan. Nestling on purpose-built shelves edging the dining room is a remarkable collection of books on food and cooking. 'I started with just a few books, now I have more than 4,000 in the cookery

CARLO BORLENGHI



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ABOVE AND TOP RIGHT:
The quirky salt and pepper shaker collection now stands at over 3,000; Paola Trifiró's library has books on food dating back to the 1500s



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collection. I decided in the 1980s to add North American and English books, and covering all kinds of culture. I travelled a lot, and I would buy books when I was away.'

Of course, Paola Trifiró has her favourite writers. 'In Italy we have the famous Pellegrino Artusi, but I like Luigi Carnacina and Luigi Veronelli. Of more recent writers, I'm a fanatical reader of Gualtiero Marchesi, and Massimo Montanari with his historical approach to cookery, and I don't miss anything by Carlo Petrini, the founder of Slow Food. In French, my *livre de chevet* cookery book is by Paul Bocuse. In English, MFK Fisher is by far the best, but I've also read Julia Child's bible, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and I'm fond of all the good, experimental recipes of Nigella Lawson.'

The collection finally got to the point where it needed more space and organisation, so Trifiró had to create a library. 'In 2006 I called a specialist to help me. It's now possible to find anything, even if you have never seen the collection before.' The library contains not just cook books, but also books on the philosophy, history and sociology of food. Special sections are dedicated to food for feasts and celebrations through the centuries, to erotic food, food in literature and in art. There are also precious books from the 16th and 17th centuries, and important *incunabula*, early printed European books older than 1501. 'I am very proud of this collection, which took a lot of time to put together.'

Sitting on elegant glass stands beside the books is Paola Trifiró's other, rather more esoteric but still food-related collection of salt and pepper shakers. 'We were in Scotland in 1978,' she explains, 'in Edinburgh, as I wanted to see the Fringe Festival. I found this small car, with the cats, and it was just a salt and pepper shaker and I thought, oh what a nice kitsch object.'

The collection has grown remarkably since then. 'I always had a passion for kitsch,' adds Trifiró, 'you can say it's a stupid thing, but with 3,000 others it became a collection. I don't know why I am a collector,' she concludes, 'but I am. People, in my opinion, are divided into two categories, collectors or not collectors. I could only have been a collector, it's not life without collecting! It doesn't matter what you collect, the animus is always the same – *recherche*, curiosity, passion and love.'