

Fresh Meat: Steve Roberts

They were sailing the Ionian islands on a chartered bareboat, four adults and two children. The kids had claimed the forecabin, where they happily irritate each other, played, read, heads down, pitching bow regardless.

Depending on the weather, supplies, or the lure of tavernas, they anchored in solitary bays or fishing harbours. This evening, under a wisteria in senses-overloading flower, they devoured platters of seafood, salads drenched in lemon and fresh olive oil. And retsina.

Apart from a donkey braying until daybreak, the boat's motion (or the retsina?) ensured they slept well. Now breakfasting on tooth-busting Greek toast, wild honey, coffee, and fresh orange juice, they decided to stay another night, restock, and cook a basic pasta bolognese on board. From the villagers they bought vegetables, salad stuffs, fruit, groceries, and must-haves they'd never use. The butcher, they were told, was up the hill on the edge of the village.

The view was worth the climb through cobbled lanes of whitewashed cottages: the village encircling the tiny harbour, its fishing boats, and beyond, the sea from which they'd come.

In the butcher's shop, with a lone hanging carcass, a hunk of lean meat on the block, they commendably mimed their requirements. Meat was diced off the hunk, into a mincer, the squiggles captured in a plastic bag, until they encouraged him to stop; all the while studiously ignoring four hooves standing sentry in the corner; and hooked above them a donkey's head.

They lunched on olives, fetta and rustic bread dipped in green unfiltered olive oil. And retsina. Then napped, until it was time to prep the bolognese.

The meat, retrieved from the fridge, was an extraordinary vision of a bag of blood. No-one could say they'd seen minced meat bleed. Carefully, half a litre of blood was strained over the side. Definitely fresh meat, they agreed.

Into the pan on the gimbaled stove went olive oil, sweet red onions and garlic. Then the meat, a carrot grated in for added sweetness, generous squeezes of lemon, freshly ground pepper, parsley, rosemary, wild thyme and a mountain of impossibly red, tender, juicy tomatoes, chopped.

As it simmered, they raised a glass of retsina to the lowering sun.