

flavours of the north

Fill your festive table with an abundance of local produce, writes CRAIG SQUIRE.

Christmas meals normally give rise to much fuss, stress, over-purchasing and waste. Ever seen a some of the Christmas food catalogues? How can people eat all that unhealthy food?

I recently read an interesting article, which again supported my belief that buying local produce is not only best for our economy, but also for the planet. The article reinforced the green aspects, one being lower emissions from the transportation of local food. Also, a simple but often ignored concept is food wastage. How many of us throw a fair percentage of their shopping out? I'll be the first to admit it, so this Christmas let's try and buy what we will actually eat.

I have compiled some shopping ideas for buying local produce that will make a super tropical antipasto platter, a cooling food to start your family Christmas feast.

ANTIPASTO BANQUET

The best way to create the family gathering is to serve a banquet, where everyone can get a seat at the table and share good food and wine, some laughs and silly hats with bad jokes.

Here's a selection of stores that offer some great products for your entrée or as the entire meal.

Buy a day or two ahead, arrange your platters early or even the day before and if you have the fridge space. Then you have more time to relax and enjoy.

- Vanella Cheese Factory at Portsmouth for mozzarella and feta from local buffalo milk, cheese from the Tableland-produced milk plus a wide variety of Australian small goods and cheeses.

- Victor's Deli on Sheridan St for local small goods, excellent breads, marinated vegetables, olive oils etc.

- Ocean Wild on Sheridan St for fresh local fish and seafood including fantastic smoked and value-added products by Pantacchini's. Available by pre-order, these include smoked local mackerel, tuna and shark as well as tasty smoked mussels.

- Johnny Mudcrab's store at Portsmouth is excellent for freshly cooked local prawns (David has a great recipe) and freshly shucked oysters.

- Byrnes Meats and Marsh Butcheries both make excellent locally made small goods and hams, perfect for cold platters. You will also be able to pick up the turkey while you're there. Make sure you pre-order though.

- Rusty's Markets for all your fruit and veggies, great locally made dips, Mungalli yoghurts and cheeses, coffee and much more.

So, try shopping around at specialty stores and buy local.



Craig Squire is the chef and director of the award-winning Red Ochre Grill on Shields St.



Roast turkey breast with port sauce, sun dried tomato and macadamia stuffing

We have all heard stories about turkey disasters – usually the whole thing cramped in the oven with its legs sticking out the door, taking hours to cook and then the poor bird gets dry as a bone.

Well there's a much better way. Turkey leg is not that great so don't buy it. Turkey breast is best and cooked off the bone even better as it's so quick to cook. It stays moist, is easy to slice and there's no waste.

Both butchers mentioned in my column, as well as many others I'm sure, sell turkey breast, supremes, pre-rolled, stuffed and seasoned products. Marshs make a seasoning to go with it and can also help with cooking tips.



Antipasto banquet

Serves 8 to 12

2 turkey breasts or supreme – skin on. (I personally avoid the pre-rolled variety as they tend to have a liquid basting seasoning included in the roll which is of dubious content and taste). White wine, olive oil, salt and pepper. Rub oil, salt and pepper over turkey in a heavy oven tray, pour in 1 cup wine. Roast at a moderate heat (170C) for 50 minutes or until cooked. Place on a fresh tray and cover tight with foil. Turn off oven and place back in to rest for about 45 minutes. This will allow the meat to steam through keeping moist and tender.

For stuffing

Unless you are confident about pocketing the breast and inserting the stuffing, which is hard for me to describe, the easy way is to make the stuffing and roll in some greased aluminum foil, then slice and serve.

- 1/4 onion
- 1/4 red capsicum
- 10g garlic

Sauté above in olive oil and add to 125g chopped and marinated sun dried tomatoes
5g chopped basil
5g chopped dill

80g roasted seasoned macadamias
100g melted butter
1 egg
Seasoning
Breadcrumbs or similar to bind
Mix together to form a firm paste, fashion into log shape with greased aluminum foil. Roll up and bake in the wine with the turkey.

For sauce

Using the roasting pan from turkey, tip off excess fat retaining most juices, place on stove on a low heat. When simmering add 1 heaped tbsp flour (or for gluten free use potato starch - about 1/2 the quantity). Stir through to form a roux, then add 120ml port, 1 tbsp tomato paste, 400ml veal or chicken stock. Stir out all lumps and reduce to a nice consistency. Check seasoning and adjust with salt and pepper. Pour into jug.

To serve

Slice turkey, and stuffing, place on the table with the jug of sauce for everyone to help themselves and enjoy Christmas Day at home.



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