

carbon diet

Eating local produce means a drastic reduction in transportation costs and leaves a smaller carbon footprint.

{ words Craig Squire
{ photography Veronica Sagredo

My family and I recently returned from traveling to Canada and California and I was pleased to see that the message of sustainable eating through using regional produce is becoming an international trend.

There is an emergence of farmers' markets selling local goods and growing public awareness. Many chefs are thinking about reducing their restaurants' carbon footprint when writing menus and making purchasing decisions. Some hotels including Fairmont and Marriot are making it policy and touting this credential along with free internet or spa treatments.

One hotel in Aspen has purchased their own farm which supplies the restaurants veggies, pork, chickens and eggs.

While dining at the Monterey Aquarium I picked up two pocket cards, one on creating your own low carbon diet the other on sustainable seafood choices.

The top five tips for reducing your carbon emissions are: (original sourced from www.eatlowcarbon.org)

- Reduce food waste and eat what you buy. This not only saves on wasted energy but reduces methane released from waste in landfills – and it saves your money too;
- Buy seasonal and regional and avoid food grown in heated greenhouses. Local fresh food is low in carbon
- Eat less beef and cheese – livestock creates 18 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. Try some kangaroo and use local cheeses;
- Avoid air freighted food. Buy Australian and local if possible;
- Ditch the junk food. The more processed and packaged the food the worse it is for the environment and yourself.

Another interesting site that expounds the virtues of eating regional and rejecting multinational fast food is www.slowfood.com. Here are two recipes that use some of our great north Queensland produce food:



Craig Squire is the chef and director of Ochre Restaurant and Catering. View his recipes at www.ochreresaurant.com.au/recipe.html



Sugar cane prawn sticks with sweet chilli lemon myrtle dipping sauce - jasmin rice

Serves 4 at 2 per person (*gluten free)

The art of this dish is in the packing. Oil the best hand, hold the cut sugar cane in the other, pick up a handful of prawn mixture and wrap it on to the cane. Don't get too much oil mixed in, smooth it off and you'll get the hang of it.

We have done this dish at several Port Douglas food and wine festivals serving about 400 in a couple of hours so it's a great party food and fun to eat. Don't forget to suck all the juice from that cane.

Recipe

600gms green prawn meat – use 40-60 local endeavour meat

15 gms sambal oelek – try Sim's available from Asian Foods

30 mls sesame oil

2 shallots – chopped

1 tbsp salt and pepper

10gms coriander – chopped

2 egg whites

Puree all ingredients together in food processor to coarsely bind.

Pack on to sugar cane sticks.

Sweet chilli lemon myrtle dipping sauce

This recipe makes about 1.5 litres. It can be stored for months in the refrigerator and makes a great dipping sauce for oysters, fish and seafood. We have even churned it to a sorbet to serve with chilled seafood on hot days.

1 lt water

250gms sugar

200 mls rice wine vinegar

100 mls fish sauce

200 mls sweet chilli sauce

2 large green chillies – sliced finely

30 gms ginger – julienne

20 mls soya sauce

25 fresh lemon myrtle leaves – shredded

Simmer all ingredients for 10 minutes then thicken slightly with potato starch.

To serve

Barbecue prawn ticks on flat plate till just cooked – serve with jasmin rice and sweet chilli sauce – garnish with sliced shallots.

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Ceviche of barramundi with finger lime dressing and shoots, leaves and nut salad

Serves 4 entrées

400 gm fresh barramundi fillet
 Slice fish about 4 mm thick
 Lay on tray
 Drizzle with mild olive oil and lime juice
 Chopped coriander, julienne ginger sliced chilli
 Sea salt and cracked pepper
 The above to taste
 refrigerate
 Best made about 3 to 4 hours prior to dressing
 This quantity will make more dressing than required for this dish
 300 ml olive oil
 4 regular limes (juiced)
 1 chilli chopped
 20 gm ginger chopped
 1 bunch coriander
 10 finger lime, cut length ways and scrape out 'roe'. Keep some for garnish
 1 egg
 Salt and pepper to taste
 Place all ingredients in and jar with a good lid and shake well.

Salad

Select fresh seasonal shoots like bean and bamboo, fresh salad leaves like frisse, mache, rocket, some herbs like thai basil and coriander Use local cashew or macadamias
 Wash and dry leaves and herbs prepare and toss with selected nuts.

To serve

Place fish on plate, centre and put salad and dressing on top



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