

promoting Australian tropical cuisine

The role of a guest chef is an ideal opportunity to espouse the virtues of Aussie produce

{ words Craig Squire
{ photography Nellie Pratt

A fantastic way of promoting Australian food products is via international guest chef promotions. This is where an Australian chef travels to another country to provide a culinary promotion using our great food products. This may be initiated by Australian Meat and Livestock, Tourism Australia, Individual Exporters or more commonly by a large hotel which wishes to provide its regular clientele with a change of flavour.

These hotels are often in cities that have large expat populations, such as Dubai, Shanghai, Singapore and Hong Kong. The ulterior motive of these establishments is that the visiting chef will provide new recipes and training to their local staff who often have no formal cooking training and learn by observation and experience. It is quite surprising how many of these promotions occur throughout the world each year involving Australia's talented chefs.

The preparation before arrival – menu design, recipes, market list and organisation of exporting the produce – is paramount to the success. I have always made a point of focusing on Queensland regional products. On most occasions Tourism Australia, Aus trade or Tourism Queensland have utilised the promotion to host dinners for wholesalers and buyers, making cost-effective marketing for our country.

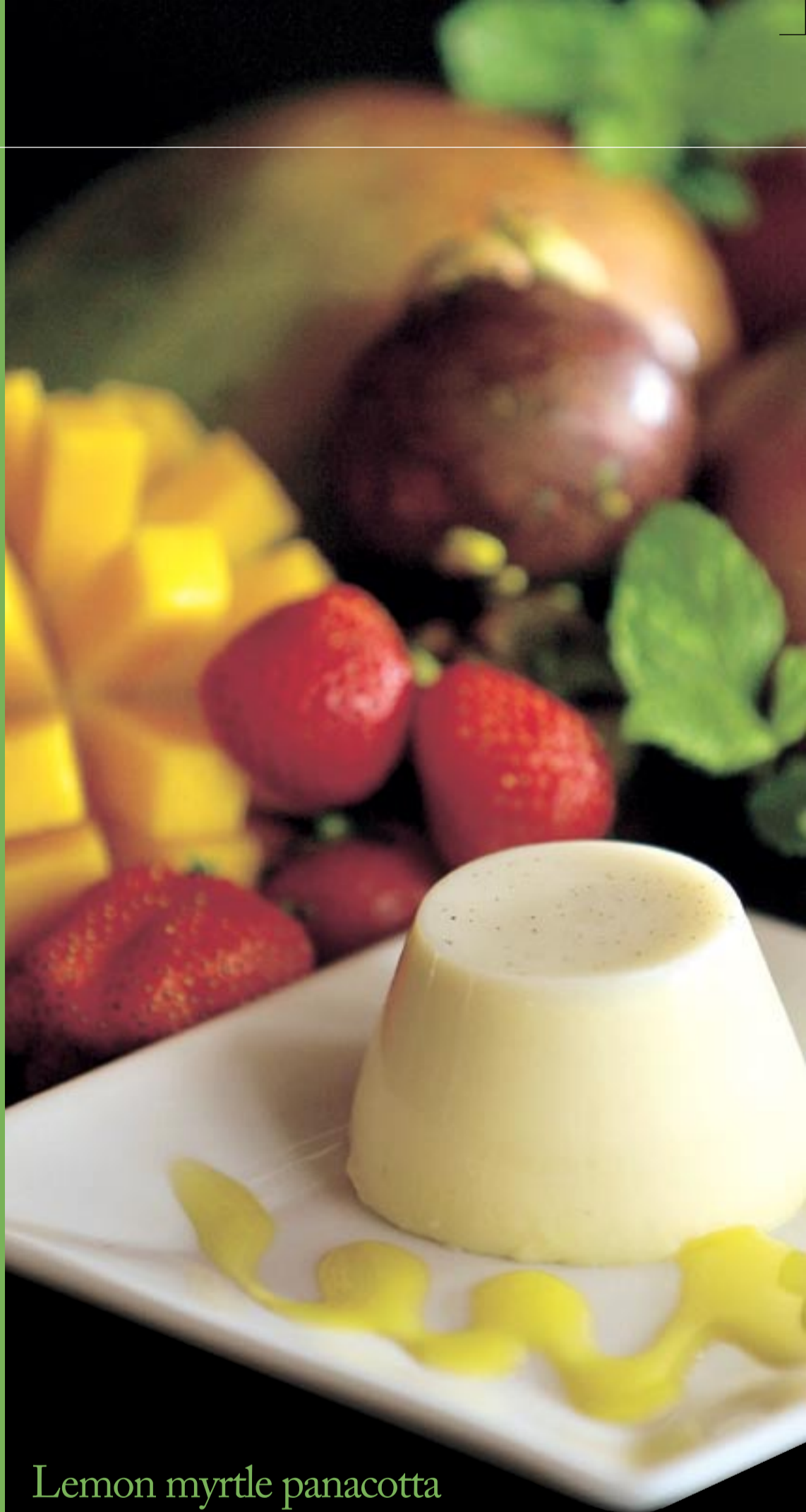
Last year I was invited on a different type of guest chef trip, which was to join the cruise ship *Astor* while it steamed up our coast, cooking dinner over four nights for 200 guests a night. It was deemed a success and I am sure the mainly German passengers on board enjoyed the freshness and lively flavours of my cooking compared to traditional fare they were getting as a norm. This year, I was asked to provide a barbecue dinner for 400 people on its sister ship the *Astoria* on its journey between Sydney and Brisbane.

With all preparations made and intent to fly down to Sydney to join the ship early on a Monday morning, I stupidly tore several ligaments in my foot. I won't recall to you how, its way too embarrassing. Anyway, after a couple of hours that Sunday arvo in agony it was very clear I would not be bouncing around from one end of a cruise ship to the other the following day. I called my head chef Nicole and with a hesitant OK coming through the phone, she was committed. Never having done this before I gave her a few tips on the expected bizarre situations that could arise, briefed her on the menu and went home to sulk. She did a fantastic job with the ship's chef and manager declaring it the best chef promotion they have ever had.

Here are two recipes that were served on the *Astoria*. Both are great for hot weather, simple to prepare and utilise our great local produce. **h**



{ Craig Squire is the chef and director of Ochre Restaurant and Catering. View his recipes at <http://www.ochrerestaurant.com.au/recipe.html>



Lemon myrtle panacotta – mango coulis

**Makes 8 at 120ml – use lightly oiled
dariole moulds**

750ml cream
250ml milk
235g sugar
20 lemon myrtle leaves
1 vanilla bean
7 gelatine leaves or 50g powdered
gelatine

shred leaves
bring all but gelatine slowly to scald
(do not boil)
strain and split vanilla bean and

scrape back vanilla bean seeds
into mix
set with gelatine
pour into moulds and set overnight in
fridge

Mango coulis
100g castor sugar
100ml water
200g fresh ripe mango

Bring water and sugar to boil to
dissolve sugar
When cool add fresh chopped mango
and blend to smooth coulis

Chilled prawn and mango salad, mint chilli and lemon aspen dressing – served with taro chips

Serves 4 as an entrée

20 freshly cooked local prawns – peeled
2 ripe but firm mangoes – sliced
1 small taro – sliced finely and fried to make crisp healthy chips
1 red chilli – sliced
2 spring onions – sliced
12 mint leaves – torn
120ml dressing

Lemon aspen dressing

(or make your favourite home dressing)

This is a wonderful fragrant dressing ideal for any salad
This recipe makes 1.25 litres of dressing

Lemon aspen vinegar:

100g crushed lemon aspen
125ml honey
500ml vinegar

Place the above ingredients in a saucepan and simmer for 30 minutes and strain
When cool, blend or shake in jar in the following ratios

750ml macadamia oil
500ml lemon aspen vinegar
2 tbsp Dijon mustard
Salt and pepper to taste

To serve

Toss all salad ingredients except taro with dressing, present either in a bowl for guests to share or plated individually, garnish with taro chips



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