

# Christmas cuisine

Make Christmas dinner easy this year by forgoing tradition, well almost! We live in the tropics, it's hot, so avoid the oven for a cool change

Entree



If you want to serve a stylish, modern meal without being too bloated to move (and still have room for the best part of this annual dinner, the pudding and custard) then try this three-course menu for eight people.

## Crab and avocado with cassava chips

### Crab and avocado mix

- 500g crab meat cut into 2cm lengths
- 3 to 4 firm but ripe avocados, diced 1cm
- 20ml lime juice
- 20g coriander chopped
- 50ml sweet chilli sauce
- 50ml olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste

### Lime Mayo

- 2 limes
- mayo
- 24 cassava chips

This lively and fresh regional dish is classic 'summer in the tropics'. Served with a sparkling it's a great way to begin your Christmas lunch or dinner. It looks great plated and is not hard or time consuming, it's also gluten free.

**Crab and avocado mix:** Check all shell is removed. Combine all ingredients in a mixing bowl. This can be prepared the day before and kept refrigerated in an air-tight container.

**Lime mayo:** Finely chop zest and combine with your favourite mayonnaise.

**Cassava chips:** Heat 500ml of vegetable oil to 180°C and fry 24 chips until golden. Place on a paper towel. They fry up similar to prawn crackers or poppadoms. These can also be prepared earlier and stored in an air-tight container in the pantry.

To assemble, using a squeeze bottle, squeeze mayo on to plate in desired pattern, start with crab mix to secure the first chip, then create a stack with crab mix and cassava chips. Garnish with coriander.

### chef's tips

- Buy Queensland sand crab or WA blue swimmer crab meat.
- Cassava chips are available from Asian food stores. They make a great garnish or snack.

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WITH CRAIG SQUIRE

Dessert



Top drop

Michael Ryan

XXXXXXXXXXXX // \$XXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXX

Rating // xxxx/20

Wine supplied by Red Beret Hotel, 411 Kameron Rd, Redlynch, ph: 4055 1249.

### Grilled ocean trout with soba noodles and mango salsa

Although I promote the use of local ingredients, it may be hard to get fresh local fish over Christmas. You can't beat fresh Tasmanian ocean trout which is my favourite fish because it's so easy to cook. It's extremely reliable in quality and supply. All these ingredients can be found at Asian food stores, Rusty's markets and your fish monger

- 8 x 180g pieces of ocean trout fillet
- Olive oil for grilling (Australian of course)
- 1 pkt soba noodles
- 50ml Japanese soya sauce and 50ml mirin

**Salsa**

- 3 firm but ripe mangos
- 1 small continental cucumber
- 1 or 2 red chillies to taste
- 30ml fish sauce
- 100g palm sugar
- 100g tamarind paste
- 100ml water
- 10g mint

Heat barbecue or grill plate, coat fish pieces with olive oil and grill to medium rare.

**Salsa:** Melt palm sugar with tamarind on moderate heat in microwave, mix with water and fish sauce and strain out tamarind pips if required. Dice mango and cucumber, finely chop mint and chilli. Mix all ingredients together.

**Soba noodles:** Cook soba noodles according to packet instructions, marinate in 50ml Japanese soya sauce and 50ml mirin. Present soba noodles by twisting them around a carving fork. Spoon salsa on to plate, distributing the liquid evenly. Garnish with pickled ginger and fresh mint. Enjoy with a lively pinot gris or young pinot noir.

### Craig's Christmas pudding

**1st session**

- 1 x 375ml Coopers Stout
- 100g sago
- 70g sultanas
- 70g raisins
- 90g dates chopped
- 50g currants
- 90g chopped unsalted macadamia nuts
- 70g glace cherries

**2nd session**

- 250g unsalted butter
- ¾ cup sugar
- 4 eggs

- 1 cup flour (plain)

- ½ tsp salt

- 1 tsp nutmeg

- 125ml port

- 2 cups white bread crumbs

- Parisienne essence to colour if desired

**Brandy 'Custard' Anglais**

- 1litre of milk

- 10 large egg yolks

- 250g caster sugar

- 1 tsp vanilla essence

- 100ml brandy

This pudding is lighter and much easier to make than most, mainly because you can prepare it in two sessions and it cooks in 90 minutes. Naturally, you could make these any time between now and Christmas, store it by wrapping in cling film and keep it in the fridge. We make these every year at our restaurant, we can also make them for you to have at home.

Makes about 1 dozen individual puddings.

**1st session:** Marinate the above together in bowl for 24 hours in fridge. Make sure sago is soft. **2nd session:** Cream butter and sugar in mixer (use beater paddle). Combine eggs and all ingredients including soaked fruit, mix thoroughly. Spoon into well-greased coffee cups or dariole moulds, to about 1cm from top. Place on deep baking tray and pour in hot water 1/3rd way up cups to create a water bath. Cover with foil and bake, at 160C for 90mins. When cool, tip out from cups and wrap individually in cling film.

**Brandy 'Custard' Anglais:** Generally the cause of much angst is the custard, whether it's your mother-in-law stressed for weeks about making the traditional custard or a friend who with best intentions scrambles the lot. I usually stay quiet in the background to emerge at the 11th hour to save the day...a small reward for 25 years in the trade.

