

shop locally

Enjoy local products and embrace tropical cuisine, writes CRAIG SQUIRE.

When I returned from traveling around the world for a few years back in 1990, it became so apparent to me how, as a nation, we really had only been borrowing cuisines from other countries and doing little in our relatively short history to create our own identifiable cuisine and style of cooking. After spending time in most parts of Asia, Middle East, and Europe I learnt that cuisine styles were created by the available local produce teamed with cooking styles that reflected the environment and wealth of each region and nation.

In the early '90s, Australia had little to call its own cuisine style. In the past 15 years we have come along way. One reason we have come so far is we – as home cooks, chefs and restaurateurs – are not bound by long-standing tradition. We don't feel obliged to cook in a particular way because that's how it's always been done. We have the freedom to create something new. The other primary reason is the availability of regional produce.

The variety of quality Australian product is now outstanding. There really is no reason why we should be importing anything except a few minor, yet essential, culinary items. We have everything from truffles and olive oil to bamboo shoots and curry pastes. Importantly, these products are generally better quality and, of course, more economically sustainable than imported substitutes. It would be great if our wholesalers, supermarkets and public supported Australian product more enthusiastically!

I recall reading back in the early '90s an article by food writer Cherry Ripe saying Australia would not have an identifiable cuisine until it creates a series of true regional cuisines. At the time we had just opened the Red Ochre Grill in Adelaide and were quite full of our own success. I at first disagreed, thinking we were right then producing Australian cuisine. Perhaps we were, but now after another 15 years of practice, we really are. We and other like-minded restaurants in this region are cooking Australian regional foods in a clearly harmonious way with our tropical environment. This has been enabled by the quality of local produce, albeit not always the easiest to find. So to support local produce, make the effort to shop around. It may cost a little more, but feel good about it because your money stays local and you never know, those producers may spend money in your business one day.

Local food has a low environmental impact and minimal carbon emission. Transporting massive amounts of food stuffs long distances uses a lot of fossil fuels. Selling and buying locally is one way of offsetting global warming.

In keeping with the endeavour prawn promotion, here's a great simple pasta dish that suits our tropical climate. Once again my concept of not providing exact quantities for all ingredients, is to allow you to experiment with flavours, so taste the dish and flavour it to your preference.

Mary's Pasta is available direct from their Moresby factory (near Innisfail). Some lines are available at Piccones.



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

Endeavour prawns, Queensland scallops with white wine, chilli, coriander, garlic and fresh tomato tossed with Mary's fettuccini

Endeavour prawns and Queensland scallop meat available from Johnny Mudcrab and other seafood retailers
Serves 4

20 large raw endeavour prawn tails - de-veined
20 scallops
300g fettuccini or your favorite pasta shape
Chopped chilli, garlic, coriander to taste
2 ripe roma or vine tomatoes - deseed and sliced
150ml white wine
15ml Australian extra virgin olive oil
Sea salt and fresh cracked black pepper

To serve

Blanch pasta in boiling salted water
Always use plenty of water to maintain temperature and room for pasta to cook. Fresh pasta takes about 5 minutes to cook.

In a large pan heat 50ml olive oil add prawns, keep on a high heat and stir, when 1/3 cooked add garlic and chilli, saute, then add scallops, and wine.

Bring to simmer add remaining oil

and season with salt and pepper, quickly toss together with chopped coriander and sliced tomato. Add pasta to pan and toss together, serve.

Make sure this cooking is done quickly to avoid overcooking the seafood. So, have everything ready and laid out to go together. Have the guests seated and the wine poured. Adding the oil to the simmering wine and stirring together will combine or emulsify to create a sauce

fresh herbs

There's an abundance of locally grown herbs in the market at present and a great use for these is to make a herb and macadamia nut crust for fish.

Unsalted macadamia nuts are available from the Wondaree stall at Rusty's.

Even though the barra season has closed this is an opportunity to try some of the excellent locally farmed product.





Barramundi with herb and macadamia crust and a lemongrass beurre blanc

Serves 4
* gluten free

For crust
1/2 small bunch (about 10g) continental parsley
1/2 bunch dill
1/2 bunch basil
1/2 bunch coriander
100g crushed unsalted macadamia nuts
100g unsalted butter - melt (do not boil)
10g garlic crushed
Zest and juice from 1/2 a lemon
Salt and cracked pepper to taste

Pick herbs and wash if required.
In food processor, crush macadamias, add all of the remaining ingredients and process together.

4 x 200g pieces of barramundi fillet.
Spread crust about 5mm thick over portioned fish fillet, place on greased baking tray and chill in fridge.

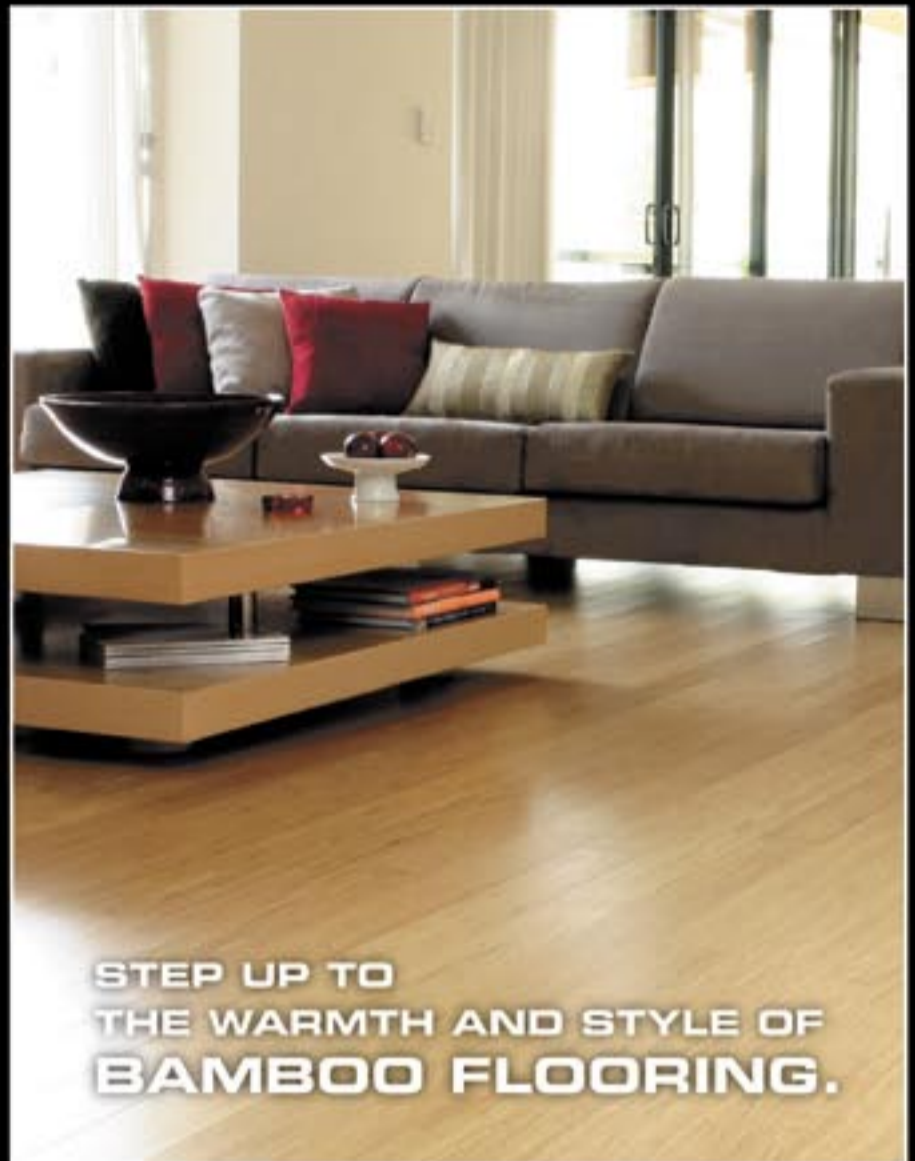
For sauce
2 sticks lemongrass
200ml white wine
20ml lemon juice
40g sugar
20ml fish sauce or salt to taste
200ml pouring cream
60g unsalted butter

Chop and crush lemongrass, place in saucepan with wine, lemon juice, sugar and fish sauce, simmer and reduce by 30 per cent, add cream and reduce by 30 per cent until slightly thickened.
Stir in cold cubed butter, do not re-boil EVER, when butter is incorporated, strain through fine sieve and keep warm.

Place barramundi into heated 170C oven for 15 minutes.
When cooked serve with sauce and fresh herb sprigs.

Excellent with an unwooded chardonnay.

Pictures by Elenor Tedenborg



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