

potential for food tourism

Promoting local produce can boost our economy and keep tourists coming back

{ words **Craig Squire**
{ photography **Veronica Sagredo**

In June I, along with many of our region's great tourism ambassadors and sales people, attended ATE (Australian Tourism Exchange) in Perth. I hadn't been for four years so thought it timely to attend, catching up with inbound operators that have sent us a steady stream of customers over many years and their wholesale counterparts from around the globe.

As a restaurateur and promoter of Australian food I look closely at the operators from around Australia and the emphasis placed on food and wine products. Over the years without doubt other states have outclassed Queensland with South Australia leading the way. Perhaps this is because of the type of product they have available to promote or may be in part due to the mindset and policy from the tourism agencies and government.

There is a need for Australia and particularly Queensland to increase its use of Australian cuisine, food and wine as a tourism product on the international stage. We have some of the world's best produce, which is grown in a clean and green way, and excellent restaurants that offer good value dining.

I was willing to sponsor and cook some tropical produce within the great hall in Perth to help lift the atmosphere and diversify the attractiveness of our region to the international buyers, something that we would all agree needs to happen.

Unfortunately not only did it not happen but I didn't even get a reason why from Tourism Queensland. Thus at the Queensland Pavilion we had coffee, imported noodle cups and Tasmanian beer to serve to our potential suppliers of badly needed international tourists!

As part of this first trip west my wife and I went to Margaret River, purely research of course!

It was great to see such a strong emphasis on local product throughout this area. Not only do they have a surprising number of wineries, but a reasonably diverse range of produce. It is well used by the region's restaurants and there are several gourmet food shops retailing local produce, something we could do with in Cairns.

For example a venison small goods farm shop on a country back road gets more than 300 visitors a day with the average spend of \$20, according to the counter attendant. This demonstrates the potential of food tourism.

My conclusion is tropical Queensland has a greater variety of food product than Margaret River, yet we are not as smart about how we incorporate it into every day life and promote it offshore. This can achieve many good things. Not only will the use of local produce reduce carbon emissions, it will improve our economy and provide more diversity to our region to entice tourists and keep them coming back.

We have fantastic pork available from the Tablelands. I know it's available from selected butchers including Marsh's.

Here's a simple recipe I cook at home that the whole family love. Frying the pork retains its moisture and tenderness and it is also an inexpensive meat option.



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

Crispy spiced pork with stir fried veggies and rice (gluten free)

Serves 4
20 minutes preparation time

Recipe

600 to 800g diced pork
1 onion
6 mushrooms
1/2 capsicum
2 bok choy
100g beans or broccoli
1 carrot
2 cloves garlic, chopped
15g fresh ginger, slivers
Potato starch to coat pork
Vegetable oil for frying
Your favourite spice mix for seasoning the pork (I use Ochre's "Secret Spice" which we sell from the restaurant)
100ml ketchup manis
60ml sweet chilli sauce
60ml tomato sauce
30ml sesame oil
1/2 cup water
Jasmine rice

Method

Cook rice with the absorption method – 2 cups of rice in a pot then place water in so when you put your index finger into the pot just touching the rice the water comes up to your second finger joint. Stir the rice add a little sea salt and bring to boil. As soon as the rice boils stir again, then put a lid on and turn the flame down very low. When the water is absorbed the rice will be cooked. Set aside. Slice vegetables. Stir fry onion and garlic in a little oil, add carrot and toss through, then green vegetables and the water. Allow it to come to the boil for 1min, add the remaining veggies and all the sauces. Bring back to simmer and set aside.

Heat 300ml oil in a deep fry pan or use a home fryer according to its instructions. Coat pork well in potato starch and place in hot oil. If using a fry pan, regulate heat and fry pork in a least three lots. This will avoid the oil coiling and the meat getting soggy and oily. When it's golden remove from oil and place in a tray lined with a paper towel and season as desired.

To serve

Place rice on plate, then vegetables and sauce and crispy pork on top.





\\cnstcpfile02\Groups\ADC\AdMakeUp\EpsOut\350157.pdf



Local premium cheese - perfect for winter

A new discovery for me is Gallo Dairyland Cheese which is located on the Atherton Malanda Rd.

Not only does it have a farm gate shop, café and tour of the dairy, with viewing into the factory, it also has great tasting chocolates and cheeses. On discovering that I could buy them wholesale I immediately switched to using their product for our restaurant cheese plates and catering. My favourites are their Tilset, Mt Quincan and the Camembert. They can be purchased at Piccones IGA.

Any local food producer that has a product they would like me to include in a future column is most welcome to email me at craig@ochrerestaurant.com.au