



The Akaroa Cooking School

Here are some references from some of our guests...

"What a pleasure it was to spend 3 days presenting at the Akaroa Cooking School. It's an absolute jewel of a location, an intimate teaching environment, owned and operated by passionate local purveyors of good taste!"

Al Brown – Guest chef, Wellington, 'Feast of Akaroa', Sep'10

Dear Lou and Ant,

What a spectacular day. I don't think I have finer food anywhere. David and I feel inspired and I am off to find a smoker. I hope you both follow your vision and ethos as it is such a wonderful concept. The lamb dish, which was heaven on a plate I am going to try with goat. I have a friend at Oxford who grows them and I buy about 3 a year. Such an amazing meat.

My tummy is so satisfied I do not think I can stay up till midnight tonight. We will be back.

Take care

Angie

Angie Brittain, Christchurch, NZ, 'Autumn Harvest' March 2011

Hi Lou and Ant,

Just wanted to thank you for an amazing day on Saturday. All 11 of us absolutely loved it, and rate it as one of life's "best days".

At an individual level it was a day of indulgence that each of us needed, especially after 22/2/11. At a team level it was even more special, and I think it will get us through the long winter ahead.

The weather was just the icing on the cake, and the 8 of us that stayed Saturday night lay out on the deck until dusk, gently digesting, basking in the heat, and wondering why we weren't living in Akaroa!

Back to reality today with the busiest day the practice has had since the quake, but made so much easier by our collective memories of a very special weekend, the highlight of which was very definitely your wonderful cooking school.

Hope Autumn sees a return of full classes post-quake - we'll be spreading the word!

Kind regards,
Donna

Donna Holdgate, Cashmere Health & Physio, private class, 26th March 2011

Note to self; if attending one of the gourmet extravaganzas that masquerade as 1-day lessons at the Akaroa Cooking School, make sure you will be staying the night rather than driving back to Christchurch! Not only are you on the receiving end of a rich litany of cooking tips, professional (and not so professional!) techniques and behind-the-kitchen-door humour but you will also leave satiated after an endless number of delicious courses and perfectly matched wines.

The day began mid-morning with a strong coffee, some delicate pastry and fruit confections and a meet and mingle with fellow Foodies. Instead of the usual top-heavy female clientele this was a refreshing mix of ages and sexes including a number of Akaroa locals, Christchurch folk from across the hill and a few token Aucklanders. The school sits looking out to the Port hills across the harbour and is a light airy space in which we spent a very pleasant 6+hours on this particular winter's day.

Our hosts for the day were Lou and Ant; owners of the School and our teacher was Chef Steve; the owner of Vangioni's; an excellent restaurant well-patronized by locals and newly-discovered by my Mother and I a few days earlier. The course for the day was Italian.

The format is simple; the class is observation style (and yes, the seats are comfortable) with plenty of breaks to sustain oneself; just in case you are overcome with the sheer exhaustion of watching someone else cook course after course in front of you!

After a small cup of rich rich hot chocolate; we moved through the techniques for baking Ciabatta bread, to pasta making and an exquisite pumpkin and walnut-filled ravioli with sage butter, to a rich creamy risotto with winter broccoli and Steve's own Chorizo and chilli to a main of proper delicately cooked and finished with a piquant salsa verde on a bed of braised

fennel. The final finish was an unctuous Tiramisu; which translates in Italian as "pick me up" although by this time I was ready to "lay me down"! Since light was fading and there was snow on Hilltop we sadly packed our desserts to take with us and left the small group of new friends still sitting around the long lunch table happily chatting away.

At \$175 a head an uninformed individual might assume this was expensive. However, I can categorically say the class offered superb value for money; think of it as a superb professionally cooked 4 course meal with excellent wines, great company and a cooking show that goes on and on for ever... a blissful Bargain!

Pippa Tabron, Auckland, New Zealand, 'Italian Feast', Jun'10

http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g285727-d1805999-r68342587-The_Akaroa_Cooking_School-Akaroa_Canterbury_South_Island.html

We have just got back to Australia after a fantastic trip. NZ is a wonderful place and I am sure Amanda and I will be back many, many times.

We had an excellent time at The Akaroa Cooking School and will be recommending it to anyone who is going to NZ. Thank you very much for a fun and interesting day. I learnt lots of good tips and enjoyed every minute of our time there. You set a wonderful atmosphere and it is an excellent venue as well. Lunch was just lovely, the scenery and atmosphere augmented the wonderful food beautifully.

Whenever we come back to NZ we will make sure to put The Akaroa Cooking School on our list of things to do, every time!

Thank you for a lovely day.

Hope to see you in the near future.

Rafe Ritchie, NSW, Australia, 'Winter Bistro', Aug'10

Hi Lou and Ant,

I want to thank you on behalf of our group for the absolutely fantastic night we had last Wednesday night. The format was brilliant and very entertaining. The food was delicious (especially our group's I might add), and everyone loved the dinner you cooked for us. We also enjoyed hearing your story about how you've come to be where you are.

This was a great way for our team to spend some relaxing fun time together. We don't get together very often with our guys spread all over the South Island, and most communication is done via email and over the phone, so it was important that an atmosphere was created where everyone could be relaxed with each other, a way to further bond our team.

Everyone I have spoken to has told everyone they know about your cooking school, so I hope a lot of business will come from this for you. You have a great model and seem to be the exact people to do this.

Thanks again, I look forward to cooking for you again sometime soon.

Cheers,
Jo

Joanne Walters, Regional Administrator, Southern Region, The New Zealand Automobile Association

Hi Lou & Ant

Thanks for facilitating a great morning for our team on Friday; the feedback from the team was fantastic and we all enjoyed every session - from herbs & spice identification through to pan frying a piece of fish properly, smoking salmon (lots of keen to be smoking enthusiasts came out of that session!) and the wonderful lunch you cooked for us.

Thanks again for a great day!

Regards,
Georgie

Georgie Talbot, Regional Sales Manager - South Island, CEREBOS GREGG'S LIMITED

Dear Lou,

Just a quick note to thank you for your excellent service in catering our recent meeting at Mt Vernon Lodge.

Everyone at the meeting was thoroughly impressed with your service. The food was great, and your team was friendly and helpful.

I particularly appreciated you going the extra mile to prepare the platters of nibbles on the Monday night.

I would have no hesitation in using you for any future catering, and highly recommend you to anyone looking for catering in the area.

Regards, Aaron McGlinchy, Team Manager, Landcare Research, Lincoln NZ

Thank you for my Akaroa Cooking School experience (which sadly seems so long ago now). When work is in a state of complete chaos I go to my "happy place" which is sitting at your dining table in the sunshine, eating deliciously simple food and sharing stories and laughter with a disparate group of people who share on many different levels a passion for food. I have since tried to recreate most of the dishes from that day with reasonable success!

I have certainly spread the word around Auckland and am looking forward to booking another one of your courses over the summer.

Gabrielle Tabron, Auckland, New Zealand, 'Fresh from the Wharf', Aug'10

Thank you so much for organizing such successful catering arrangements for our Bates Reunion.... your meticulous planning paid off and ensured the event progressed seamlessly.

Thank you also for the excellent meal, it was thoroughly enjoyed by all and your staff members were attentive and efficient.

Your chocolate brownie served at afternoon tea was the best I had ever tasted - and I had numerous compliments on the evening meal.

I would have no hesitation in recommending The Akaroa Cooking School.

Annie McEwin, Finance Coordinator, Department of Electrical and Computing Engineering, University of Canterbury, NZ

Thank you sooooo much for the tickets to the Akaroa Cooking School's "Single and Starving" yesterday!! I took along one of the girls from work who is also single, and who loves doing things with food.

Lou and her husband Ant are wonderful hosts and put on fabulous "how to" demonstrations – Lou with the cooking, and Ant with the hot smoker – as well as regaling us with some tales that perhaps one of the two male guests (the one who was her brother!!) might have felt slightly uncomfortable about being revealed. A vision of Doug "incinerating" the food he was about to smoke for his housewarming with white spirits instead of meths will be difficult to forget!

The women were a mixed bunch – a DHB project manager, a teacher, a legal executive, a marketer and part time pilates instructor, a medical rep and a legal secretary - and, although disappointed at the low male turnout, we all found plenty to talk about and enjoyed a lively sit-down lunch of the dishes Lou had demonstrated for us - Herb and Butter Crusted Beef, Potatoes Dauphinoise and Green Vegetables, followed by berry sorbet, chocolate fondant and melt in your mouth macaroons (hand delivered from Christchurch!) - as well as wines matched to the food by Ant.

Almost all the food was sourced locally (from Canterbury, if not Akaroa) and although looking very impressive, was relatively straightforward to prepare and present. An added bonus was that we got to keep the recipes for each dish, as well as suggestions of places in Christchurch we could obtain bits and bobs for preparing any future "date meals".

And what presentation of a romantic evening meal would be complete without an idea for brunch!!! Of course, that is assuming that all goes to plan on the date!!!!

I would really recommend people head over the hill to Akaroa to experience one of Lou and Ant's cookery demonstrations and meals – the cost is well worth it for a great escape from the rat race and to meet some new people with a shared interest in food. I would especially recommend the "Single and Starving" day to any guys out there – food is a sure way to this girl's heart (and I cannot be the only one!!)

Deb Drew, Christchurch, New Zealand, 'Single & Starving', Aug'10

As you may remember from an earlier post, Jocelyn's birthday present to me was a private cooking lesson and meal at The Akaroa Cooking School. Two weekends ago we drove to Akaroa for a lesson and it could not have been better. When we first arrived we were greeted by Lou, our teacher for the day.

We learned that we were the first people to have a private cooking class there ever, which was very exciting. They had a beautiful table set up for us with gorgeous flowers, wine glasses, decorated napkins and cutlery.

We first sat down with Lou and had morning tea with home baked brownies as we went over the plan and recipes for the day. She went over the five dishes we were going to cook as well as the basic and advanced cooking techniques we were going to learn. The greatest part about this cooking lesson was that not only did we learn five great recipes, but we also learned many cooking techniques that we will be able to use for many different dishes we cook in the future. Lou had planned out the time schedule so that each dish would be done at the right time which meant cooking them out of order, but for ease of explanation I will describe each dish in the order we ate them.

The first dish we ate was roasted pumpkin, mascarpone & thyme tartlets. This was made by first starting with ready-made savoury shortcrust pastry which we cut into small circles to line the inside of a mini muffin tin. We then added small pieces of roasted pumpkin, a dollop of mascarpone cheese, a few thyme leaves, and a small piece of feta cheese. Next we prepared a mixture of eggs, cream, salt and pepper that we used to fill each pastry 2/3 of the way. We then placed in the oven to bake for 20 min. The nice thing about this dish is that it is something that you can make ahead of time and pop in the oven to warm it up right before dinner and you can do a million variations on it with different vegetables and herbs.

The second dish that we made was a smoked salmon & horseradish crostini. This dish was by far the easiest to make and involved starting with a skinny baguette that had been thinly sliced, sprayed with olive oil, salt and peppered and toasted. We topped this with a mixture of cream cheese and Mandy's horseradish sauce. We then added a little rosette of smoked salmon to the top to complete the dish. What really made this dish stand out was Mandy's horseradish that is hand made in Christchurch. We enjoyed this horseradish so much that we decided to buy a jar. We ate these two canapés together accompanied with a glass of bubbly.

Next we moved on to the appetizer which was roasted aubergine (eggplant) parcels with mozzarella, sundried tomatoes & pesto with a balsamic glaze and micro greens. We started this dish by thinly slicing the aubergines lengthwise and then pan frying them. We then in a mini food process combined basil, olive oil, garlic, salt, roasted pine nuts and freshly grated parmesan. After learning how easy it was to make your own pesto and how much better it tasted than what we buy in the store Jocelyn and I proclaimed that we will only use homemade pesto now on in our cooking. We then took one slice of the grilled aubergine and in the center layered a slice of fresh mozzarella, a dollop of pesto, and a few pieces of sundried tomatoes. We repeated this layering and then added a dash of pepper, folded up the aubergine slice and then added a second slice of aubergine to wrap around

fully closing up the parcel. We then topped this with some micro greens. For the plating of this dish we first made a balsamic glaze by reducing a high quality balsamic vinegar. We placed this reduction in a plastic squeeze bottle so that we could drizzle it onto the plate which made it look so professional. The aubergine parcel was then placed on top of it. We loved this dish so much that we made it again at home a few days later!

For the main course we made an herb crusted gurnard fillet (white fish) on creamy citrus mash with fresh green beans & lemon infused olive oil. To start we made the lemon infused olive oil. To do this we heated a good quality olive oil in a pan and added large chunks of lemon zest. The trick is to make sure the oil is warm enough but not too hot, you should be able to stick your finger in for a few seconds without getting burned. This is then allowed to cool and is stored with the zest still in it. This is one thing that you can modify depending on your dish to infuse the olive oil with just about any flavor you can imagine. For the mash we boiled peeled Agria potatoes, but any floury potato will do. Once cooked, we strained out the water and added warm cream and butter and mashed them. Next we stirred in lemon juice and added salt and pepper to taste. For the fish we used fresh gurnard filets that were caught just the day before! We then made a bread crumb mixture that consisted of bread, thyme, parsley, butter, lemon zest and the flesh of a preserved lemon. For those of you that have not heard of preserved lemons, they are lemons that are pickled in brine of water, lemon juice, and salt. They have a very strong salty lemon flavor so a little bit goes a long way. This is something that Jocelyn and I had never used before in cooking before and liked so much that we bought a jar of them. Once the bread crumb mixture was prepared we put it on top of each fillet. Next we drizzled a little infused olive oil on the fish and grilled it for a few minutes until the fish is cooked and the crust was golden. For plating we put a large scoop of the citrus mash on the plate topped with cooked green beans and then the fish on top of that. We then drizzled the lemon infused olive oil over the fish. We ate this dish with a nice sauvignon blanc.

The last course was dessert which consisted of crème brûlée with rhubarb & orange compote. For the rhubarb and orange compote we cut up the rhubarb. Lou showed us the proper way to use a knife for chopping. We mixed the rhubarb with brown sugar orange juice and zest. We then covered this and popped it in the oven until the rhubarb was tender. For the crème brûlée we first heated some cream and vanilla paste until almost boiling in a pot and set aside to cool. Next we whisked together egg yolks and sugar. During this step we learned a good way to separate the egg yolks from the whites is to pour the eggs into your hand and the egg whites will slip right through your fingers with yolks remaining in your hand unbroken. We then slowly added the warm cream mixture to the egg mixture making sure not to add it too fast that it would scramble the eggs. Next we strained the mixture and poured it into ramekins. The ramekins were then placed in a water bath in the oven. This mixture was baked at a low temperature until set with centers slightly wobbly. Making these was relatively simple which was a surprise to us both. Once set the ramekins were allowed to cool and then

refrigerated. The next step was to place a small amount of caster sugar on the top and then caramelize with a blow torch. This proved to be very tricky because the goal is to caramelize the sugar while heating up the mixture as little as possible. I will have to admit that Jocelyn was much better at this than I. With dessert we had a Selaks ice wine that went along very nicely.

All in all we were cooking, eating and learning for about 5 hours but the time seemed to fly by. It was one of my best birthday presents ever.

Everyone at the Akaroa Cooking School was so amazing to us and they really made the day very special and something we will both remember forever.

<http://jocelyntreynz.blogspot.com/2010/05/treys-birthday-gift-akaroa-cooking.html>

Jocelyn Fary-Holzwarth, Boston, USA, Private Class, May'10