



The Akaroa Cooking School

What's New or in the News

March 2011

Christchurch Earthquake

Our thoughts go out to all those affected by last month's devastating earthquake in Christchurch. It's hard to imagine the heartache of losing loved ones and the damage to people's houses and Lou and I have certainly been thinking of you all. We would like to send our special thoughts to Jeff and family from Wick's Fish who have lost Nat - a wonderful wife, mother, and for us, our amazing Christchurch seafood supplier. Our thoughts are with you all at this difficult and tragic time.

Akaroa luckily suffered no damage in the February quake and it is very much business as usual. Many people we have spoken to have said that it is important for businesses, where possible, to operate as normal. We spoke with guests booked into our 'Gourmet in a Day' cooking class on the Saturday following the quake to gauge their thoughts and mostly, they all 'definitely' wanted to come along to take part in the class, to take their minds off recent activities. It was an amazing class and we were all pleased we ran it, to get us, and our guests back a sense of normality.

For anyone looking to get out of Christchurch for a break, Akaroa is fully open and has a lot of accommodation options for anyone displaced from Christchurch. Check out www.akaroa.com for more information.

We thought about whether we should be sending out our latest newsletter given recent events. We spoke to a lot of people and they all thought it may come as a bit of light relief to people from the wall to wall coverage the quake has had for the past few weeks. We hope it does, as we certainly want to look at some positives in these devastating times!!

Gourmet Road Trip

During February in a joint venture with Steve, from Vangionis restaurant we ran our very first Gourmet Road Trip. It ran over four amazing days where we headed out and about the Banks Peninsula to meet our suppliers, harvested local seafood, had outdoor cooking demonstrations, long lunches and loads of great local wine

Day one was based around Akaroa harbour and after a hearty breakfast of local eggs and home cured speck at the cooking school, we drove around the scenic coastal route to Wainui wharf where we met Willy from Akaroa Salmon. They had just returned from a harvest and the class had a chance to ask questions about Akaroa salmon and check out the operations.



Neil Barnett at Kingfisher Smokehouse

Armed with two beautiful salmon we headed back to Akaroa via Vangionis restaurant, vegetable garden where we picked veges and fresh herbs for lunch. Paua ravioli, roasted salmon on fresh garden veges, home made bread and a delicious light lemon cream with fresh Takamatua berries.

After lunch we wandered down the wharf and jumped in the boat for a cruise around the harbour. We visited the salmon farm in Lucas Bay, and the mussel farm, joined by numerous hector dolphins en route. Finally that night the class enjoyed dinner at Steve's renowned Akaroa restaurant and institution, Vangionis.



Alexia and Lynette digging for pipis at Le Bons Bay

After breakfast, we started day two with a drive up the Takamatua valley to meet Hugh Fraser on his sheep farm. We had a fantastic tour of Hugh's magnificent farm and homestead, and checked out the woolshed where Hugh talked us through sheep farming on the Peninsula.

We then crossed to the other side of the valley and caught up with Neil and Rebecca Barnett who cure and cold smoke Akaroa salmon. Our guests saw the cold smoker in action and watched as Rebecca finely sliced the salmon for packaging. Accumulating more produce we headed over the hill to Le Bons bay for low tide. Here we waded out to dig for pipis, gathered fresh mussels from the rocks and headed up the river to collect some little neck clams.

Steve then cranked up the charcoal bbq and cooked up fresh Hapuka steaks, Ant hot smoked some salmon and Lou made fresh basil aioli. Lunch was eaten under the sun at a long picnic table in the domain with chilled local wines to help wash down the amazing feast.



Ev Moorhead at Gruff Junction milking the goats

On day three the class headed to Greenpark to meet Anna Moorhead at her father, Ev's goat farm. Ev milks the goats and Anna turns it into a range of award winning cheeses. Anna started Gruff Junction Cheese after returning from the UK where

she learnt the art of cheese making. It's a fascinating process and the class sees first hand the milking in progress, and Anna making the cheeses. Then we wound our way up Kaituna valley to Kaituna orchards where they were packing delicious peaches and cherries.

Over the road we met Grant Whelan, owner and winemaker of Kaituna Valley wines. In the vineyard we tasted his outstanding chardonnay, pinot gris and pinot noir. Armed with a few bottles we headed back to the cooking school for lunch with our recent acquisitions. The shell fish collected the previous day had fully purged overnight, (to get rid of the sand) and as the conversation on the trip back had turned to Asian cooking, Steve and Lou whipped up a delightful Thai curry with loads of ground spices and freshly cut lime and chilli. Impromptu cooking with great fresh local produce doesn't get any better.



On the fourth and final day we headed back to Takamatua Valley and drove up to meet Graham Toner at Folly Farm. Graham grows the most amazing berries and gave the class a tour around his farm. There was some serious sampling going on amongst the class!

We then we headed over the hill to Robinsons Bay where we met Chris and Annette Moore who run Robinsons Bay Olive Oil. After a tour of the grove we went to the tasting room and sampled the range of their award winning extra virgin olive oils.

After another luscious lunch including mussel and chorizo hotpot, marinated vegetables, freshly baked bread and a fabulous goats cheese selection at the cooking school, Steve pulled out the mincer and sausage maker and showed the class how to make sausages, chorizo, bresaola and speck. This was quite hands on for a few members of the class, and was very humorous viewing for the other members of the class.



Steve and Anna making Merguez sausages

After a break everyone assembled back at the cooking school for the finale dinner and what a feast. Sadly after a full on four days with great company, food and wine the trip came to an end.

We have another three day road trip planned to tie into the Feast of Canterbury in September, however if you think you might be able to organise a group of 8 people we can run one over the next few months if dates suit. Please call Ant on 021 166 3724 or email me at ant@akaroacooking.co.nz to discuss.



Lunch at Le Bons Bay

Akaroa Mussel Farm

Last week the crew on board Te Au Miro pulled into the Akaroa wharf to unload their fresh harvest of Greenlip mussels. Barry, the captain and his crew had been on the other side of the harbour at the mussel farm just south of Wainui harvesting the days catch. Built in 2002 the Te Au Miro is one of the largest aluminium vessels built in New Zealand and cost a whopping \$2.3m. I was fortunate enough to be given the guided tour around the boat including the very impressive engine room tour. Purpose built, the Te Au Miro boasts a huge rear deck to house the mussels, once harvested can carry around 20 tonnes at a time.

Barry and his crew will generally be found plying the waters throughout the Marlborough Sounds where the majority of New Zealand's mussel farms are located. Starting in the 1960's pioneers developed mussel farms in response to increasing world demand for seafood. Wild fishery is unable to meet the increase in demand, and the aquaculture industry is the sustainable answer. There are now 550 mussel farms in New Zealand covering more than 4,500 hectares. More than 55,000 tonnes of Greenlip mussels are farmed each year. The ideal growing conditions include deep, clean and cool waters and the farm in the Akaroa harbour ticks all the boxes.



Barry on board Te Au Miro

A 100mm fully grown farmed mussel starts life in a nursery as a baby mussel otherwise known as a spat. The mussel spats are attached to a rope and encased in a mesh stocking. These dissolve in seawater after a few weeks by which time the mussel has attached itself to the rope. After three to six months the mussels are taken off the nursery lines and attached to larger ropes where they remain until harvest.

The entire growth period to harvest length takes between 12 to 18 months. During harvest, Barry and his crew pull up the ropes, release the mussels and fill up one tonne bags. The



truck meets them at the end of the wharf where the catch is loaded and taken to Christchurch as soon as possible to ensure maximum freshness.

Barry, the captain, doubles as the crew's chef and was struggling to order produce in for the next leg of their journey after the recent earthquake. Their usual port of call at Lyttelton was closed. The cooking school placed an order for him which arrived the following day. As a thank you, Barry wandered down the wharf to the cooking school with a rather large bag of freshly harvested mussels which was put to good use – of course!

Delicious magazine



The Akaroa Cooking School was featured in the latest edition of the Australian 'Delicious' magazine (March 2011). The article featured the top foodie spots, around Canterbury and Akaroa and "The Cooking School" amongst other great local businesses received a great write up.

Recipe of the month

Grilled Gurnard Fillets with Cherry Tomatoes, Chorizo and Fresh Herbs



- 2 shallots finely sliced
- 4 cloves garlic chopped
- 150g good quality chorizo
- 1 punnet of each red and yellow cherry tomatoes
- 1 bunch basil
- Good quality extra virgin olive oil
- 4 gurnard fillets
- Fennel fronds
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Lemon juice

Cherry Tomatoes, Chorizo & Fresh Herbs:

Add a little oil to a heavy based pan and add shallots and garlic until softened. Add chorizo and fry for a minute or two and then

add tomatoes and cook until tomatoes are softened but not completely broken down. Add fresh basil and season to taste.

Grilled Gurnard:

Preheat grill on its highest setting.

Place fillets on a lined tray and brush with a little melted butter. Season well with salt and pepper and chopped fennel fronds. Place under the grill for approx 3 - 4 minutes until just cooked.

To Plate and Serve:

Add a spoonful of the fresh tomato and chorizo sauce into the centre of a warmed bowl. Top with a gurnard fillet, a squeeze of lemon juice and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil.

Upcoming classes

'Gourmet in a Day' – Sunday 17th April & Friday 22nd April

Based around a high end four course dinner party menu, this class is for people looking to take their next dinner party to a higher level. The day will kick off at 10am with tea, coffee and some freshly baked treats from the kitchen.

You will then get comfortable and spend the next few hours watching the cooking demonstrations and learning about the produce and the techniques involved in creating a fabulous dinner party menu with some canapés to start. There is a real emphasis on what can be prepared in advance so you can spend more time with your guests, the next time you are entertaining at home.

Then its time to tuck into the mouth watering treats that have been demonstrated, along with carefully selected matching NZ wines. The day will finish up around 4pm and you will then be free to walk off lunch around scenic Akaroa.

'The Ultimate BBQ' – Sunday 24th April (Final class for season)

This class is a must for those of you looking to completely upgrade their BBQ skills and learn how to cook a new repertoire of delicious BBQ recipes. The cooking school chefs will run through the BBQ essentials including great produce, what to look for and where to source it.

We will also demonstrate the best techniques to cook produce such as chicken, lamb, beef and most importantly how to cook the perfect steak. We will also show you how to use the hot smoker and demonstrate hot smoking some freshly caught fish.

It's thirsty work on the BBQ so there will be plenty of matching local beer and wines to help quench the palate throughout the day.

The day begins at 10am for coffee and pastries and will conclude around 4pm. This is our last BBQ class for the summer season - limited spaces.

'Autumn Harvest' – Saturday 30th April

The Akaroa Cooking School will be sharing autumn recipes from seasonal produce we have collected from in and around Akaroa and the harbour.

Autumn is a fantastic time of year for cooking. Some of the produce is at its best and with winter fast approaching it's time to make the most of it.

The cooking school team will demonstrate lots of simple mouth watering recipes with the produce we have collected and the day will finish up by having an autumn feast at the large dining table with matching NZ wines.

We will demonstrate, that by using great produce and following the right cooking techniques, you can produce restaurant quality food right there in your own home.

The day will finish up around 4pm.

'A Day in Thailand' – Saturday 07th May

Inspired by many trips throughout Thailand over the years the cooking school has put together their favourite Thai dishes into a one off special class - 'A Day in Thailand'. From making and cooking dumplings, dipping sauces, Thai curries, stir fry's, Pad Thai, Asian salads, this class is perfect for those who love Thai food and are keen to learn the tips and techniques on maximising those flavours we all love about Thai food.

The cooking school team will also show you the essential kitchen equipment required to help in the cooking process, where to buy them and also where to source authentic Thai ingredients.

The day begins at 10am for coffee and pastries and will conclude around 4pm.

'Mothers Day Indulgence' – Sunday 08th May

What better way to recognise your Mum's hard work throughout the year by rewarding her to a day of complete indulgence at the cooking school, or a Cooking School Gift Voucher for her to use at her leisure. A day at the Cooking School will be all about your Mum, beginning with a selection of tea / coffee and some freshly

baked teats from the kitchen. Following this your Mum will take a seat, we begin the cooking demonstrations (and more bubbly) so no need to worry about your Mum doing the cooking as it will all happen right in front of her eyes.

The menu on the day will feature simple yet elegant recipes designed to inspire your Mum to add to those family favourites.

This class is limited, and the atmosphere relaxed and cosy. The cooking school team will pander to your Mum's every need. The day will conclude with a beautiful meal around the schools large dining table with matching, award winning local wines - and best of all Mum just gets to eat amazing food, drink beautiful wine and leave without even thinking about who's going to do the washing up.

The day begins at 10am for bubbly and pastries and will conclude around 4pm. This is a one off class - limited spaces.

Happy cooking,
Ant & Lou

