

February 2011

Seafood NZ Latest Feature
Seafood New Zealand
Articles
Recipes
Archives

Cooking up some attention

They call it the Lonely Planet effect. It's what happens when the world's best selling guide book recommends you. What it means is business - lots of it.

So when Lonely Planet recently named Banks Peninsula among the world's top 10 places to learn to cook the local cuisine, the Akaroa Cooking School found itself on the receiving end of some attention.

It said the area had growing foodie credentials based on its fresh, locally sourced food. The Akaroa Cooking School, it said, "focuses on local, organic ingredients including lots of fresh New Zealand seafood."

Lou Bentley is the school's head chef and co-owner (along with her husband). She'd come to Akaroa many times as a child on holiday with her family and "it just seemed right."

She says the attraction of the place, from a food perspective, is the availability of fresh food.

"I like the idea of locally sourced food because I just think it tastes better. Some of the shellfish we use at the school we collect ourselves. The rest of the seafood we buy from a local fisherman. We tell him what we're looking for menu-wise and he targets that type of fish. Often we wait to see what's come back and go from there. He gets lots of gurnard, and flatfish like sole and flounder."

She says most of the customers at the moment are from Timaru and Dunedin in the south and Wellington and Hawkes Bay in the north. Some take advantage of flight specials and travel over from the east coast of Australia for a weekend of sight-seeing and cooking.

Lou says she's always been into food. "I grew up on a farm and we always had a huge vege garden. Mum was a very traditional cook and the food always tasted great."

After a time in London, and having graduated from chef school and worked in various restarants and catering businesses, Lou wanted to start her own food business.

"I realized that I loved food and teaching was a passion too, so a cooking school was the perfect thing."

[Click here](#) to see one of Lou's salmon recipes.



Lou Bentley



[Manuka Smoked Akaroa Salmon »](#)