

Recipe

I am afraid that you will have to give up the idea of buying local for Taleggio cheese, it's only made in the valley of Taleggio in Lombardy in Italy. The cheese is soft and pungent and goes perfectly with sweet onions and walnuts. This tart is great to take on a picnic with a rocket or baby spinach salad and as I write this I have piece in the freezer that I am going to heat up to have for lunch. Pastry freezes so well: soon at Manna we will be launching a frozen range of breakfast brioche, tarts and cakes — all can be stored in the freezer and then used whenever you feel like one. Look out for the brioche filled with pinenuts and pesto or feta, caramelised onions and vino cotto.

Taleggio and Walnut Tart

200g plain flour
70mls extra virgin olive oil
50g Parmesan cheese, grated
1 teaspoon Maldon sea salt
3 tablespoons water

Filling

4 red onions
100mls olive oil
2 sprigs rosemary
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
80g walnuts, roughly chopped
150g Taleggio cheese
1 egg, lightly beaten

Set oven to 180°C

Put all the pastry ingredients except the water in a food processor and whizz up until the texture is like fine bread-crumbs. Add the water gradually and process until the dough comes together. Turn it out onto a floured work bench and bring together with your hands. Cover with cling film and rest it in the fridge for thirty minutes.

For the filling: thinly slice the onions and fry them in a heavy saucepan with the olive oil and the rosemary until soft and turning brown. Add the balsamic and then simmer until completely reduced and you should have a thick, unctuous topping. Season well with salt and pepper.

Cut the dough in half and roll the pastry into a rough rectangle about 20cm wide and 35cm long repeat with the other half of the dough. Lift onto a flat baking sheet. Spread the onion mixture onto the tart, leaving an inch along either side of the length uncovered — this is going to make the edges. Sprinkle the roughly chopped walnuts and torn up pieces of Taleggio on top. Fold the edges over and brush with egg mixture.

Bake for 30–40 minutes until brown and bubbly; check underneath to see the pastry is brown completely.

new frozen range



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In Pursuit of Perfection



Heston Blumenthal is at it again with further adventures in search of perfection. This multi-talented chef of the Ferran Adria persuasion, who cooks dishes like snail porridge (sounds foul) at his restaurant the Fat Duck in England, in his spare time quests for perfection in recipes. In his first book, he went to extraordinary lengths to perfect the Black Forest Gateaux and the pizza. He travelled around the world researching and perfecting and, with this book, he is doing the same thing and with only eight recipes. I am knee-deep in the story of chicken tikka masala as he arrives in India to visit the restaurant with the world's oldest tandoor oven; I am fascinated by his quest and I actually think I am going to follow the recipe he perfects. Heston is a lover of the science of food — you will find no alchemy in these two books, but lots of information.

Special of the Month

In keeping with the fight for the good and the best: that's exactly what we have been doing in the Manna from Heaven kitchen. Andrea, our head pastry chef, has been working on the classic Lamington, using Callebaut chocolate and loads of coconut. We welcome our new 'Lamington' — please come and try it the next Growers' Market or ask your distributor for a sample.

classic lamington



MANNA FROM HEAVEN
HANDMADE IN AUSTRALIA

June & July

I cannot believe that we are saying goodbye to summer. I have hardly been to the beach and all the flowers are topsy-turvy — I swear the gardenias have flowered twice this year.

When I first decided to move to Australia from England twenty years ago, people quizzed me on where I was going (i.e. the other side of the world) but luckily I was one of the informed. I met Kathy while training in London; she was from Australia and she would talk about home and show me magazines she'd had sent over. I was so excited — the food looked incredibly fresh and exciting and all the photos were infused with a light that was rarely seen in England. I simply wanted to go there. When I arrived in WA (Fremantle, to be exact) to set up a private dining club I knew no one. I rang up restaurants and spoke to chefs and phoned suppliers to ask for their help. Very quickly I had help from a game man: he brought me half a truck-load of quails and ducks. This was just what I needed, but he had to drive over four hours to get to me! In the restaurant I was setting up I needed fresh herbs; the game man said his wife grew them — fabulous, for the six months I was cooking there we had lovely bunches of herbs. Both these people became an intricate part of my web of suppliers. Then I met my fish people, who introduced me into the wonders of wahoo fish. I loved this: a really firm fish that worked so well on skewers on a barbecue — another new thing to me. I was talking to as many people as I could.

Next I needed goat's cheese. (I was used to having the whole of the French market open to me!) Someone told me there was woman called Gabriella, who had some goats. I got a sample of the cheese she made — perfect. Unfortunately she could only deliver as far as Cottesloe, so I organised someone to pick it up. I rolled out some thin oat-cakes and lo and behold I had a cheese board coming on. Then I tasted Watsonia cheddar — A far cry from cheddar from the Cheddar Gorge! — soft and mushy but piquant. That would do nicely.

My fruit and vegetable man got the idea that we could fly things in from other states and he did and he forgave me my ridiculous ordering in the middle of the night. I would refer to vegetables by their English names, calling zucchini 'courgette' and eggplant 'aubergine'. I was in Australia and I was falling in love with the ingredients.

Cut to 2008: now in Australia, among us chefs and food people, we have embraced things organic and, yes, there is conclusive evidence that organic food is better for you. It stands to reason that foods grown without chemicals and additives are going to be better (no rocket science needed there). I turn my head away from processed food, but I find it hard to say goodbye to Coke. I also have a slight fascination with Arnott's Shapes and their advertising campaign — flavour you can see. On a Friday night with a beer there is nothing better.

As we embraced the organic movement we also welcomed the Slow Food movement a reaction in Italy against fast food operations like McDonald's and Taco Bell. Their logo is a snail; sadly, I feel (although I totally support the movement) that the name conjures images of people moving around in rather a slow fashion. It's not and Carlo Petrini, who founded Slow Food, has inspired many people to form 'conviviums' all around the world, reinforcing the manifesto 'locally grown, sustainable, artisan methods of production and growing'. This is all good and I totally endorse it, but I know you can make good fast food. And now there're these things called 'food miles' and 'regional produce' and this is where the first minefield opens up for me.

Buying locally, buying regional and food miles are all ways of saying that we need to buy food that is grown near where we live: according to their manifesto (actually it's not a known group) we must buy things from within a twenty-kilometre radius or, even better, from our little farm down the road. I don't have a little farm down the road (wish I did). Some years ago at an organic convention I was on a panel for a discussion for producers. At MFH we make an organic chocolate biscuit and I was chastised because I was not using organic Australian butter. I had to explain to this farmer that I had, in the developing of this biscuit, wanted to use Australian butter and had got samples from all over the place but none of it was anywhere near as good as I could find in Denmark, from a company called Harmonie. It's a lovely, creamy-tasting butter that is very low in water. (We use NZ butter — another superior product — in all Manna cakes, because it also produces better results.) I am reminded again that if it's better I will travel a long way to get it. In business I will and I do. My striving for the best-tasting produce is my number one concern. Yes, I love purchasing locally and if it is good and local I am more inclined to choose it, but just because something is local, regional, organic and in season is still not enough for me if it does not taste really good. Now comes 'foraging' (nothing new here — it's just being reinvented by the media): the latest trend in America, England and now Australia. These are specialist people who go and find wonderful things naturally growing in the hedgerows of England and in the leafy fields of Connecticut. It's not enough (according to what I read in English and US magazines) to source your own ingredients for home and restaurants, you now need official foragers to go find these things for you. In England we have Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, who expounds what's available in local hedgerows, free for the picking. Just watch out for poisonous mushrooms. America, in all its earnestness is doing the same. (Mind you, Alice Waters from Chez Panisse was doing this over twenty years ago.) But everyone now has a newfound zeal for the idea, with these foragers bringing their fare back to smart London restaurants and everybody feeling really good and it tasting ...? Well, I am sure some of it tastes delicious.

In Australia, we are doing the same. Hugh Wennerborn (Is it a Hugh thing?) started a long time ago with Murdoch food, sourcing the best-grown products. Now he is concentrating on delivering to the home market. Then there is Grant Hilliard, who works part time at Sean's Panaroma and as a forager for all things good for other restaurants. I was at Alex Herbert's two-year anniversary celebration for her restaurant Bird Cow Fish the other night. While I helped her cook zucchini flowers for sixty, I picked at the lamb (neck) that Grant had sourced from the Hampshire Downs. It tasted delicious —

in fact I woke up the next morning wishing I had some of that lamb to feast on with a bit of toast.

I love the quest for good food and it seems to me that we come full circle in the pursuance of it time and time again — a bit like reinventing the wheel.

Paul Grooten

