

The Grocer's Seasonal Newsletter

Winter 2005

Update

It's hard for me to believe that we're two thirds of the way through winter already. And what a great season for food. I've been surprised at how drastic our food consumption has changed, even in Perth where our seasons don't vary too wildly.

But, sure enough, as soon as the first drops of rain were being soaked up by our dry sand, sales of pulses, stock and dried mushrooms skyrocketed. I'd love to know how many mushroom risottos have been consumed in Perth this winter!

Speaking of which, I hope those who were able to get hold of our snap frozen wild French mushrooms enjoyed them. We were able to make porcini, chantarelles and morels available in 100g bags for the first time this year. We'll have them available again next May.

I hope you've been able to drop in and see the changes we've made in the showroom. If not, take a look at the changes we've made to the website. There you'll find a list of all our products and an update on what's new. So you should always be able to find what you're looking for.

As promised, I've been out and about in Australia's food hot spots. This time our attention was focussed on South Australia. They certainly have a passion for locally produced products. My favourites were the Farmhouse Cheeses of Kangaroo Island. It was fascinating to see a small farm in South Australia making fantastic brie using traditional methods. The Barossa Valley Farmers Market was also a great testament to locally produced organic fare. If only I could have brought it all home!

Next we're off to Sydney for the Fine Food Fair. Can't wait!

In the meantime, we'll be enjoying the cold, dark days with plenty of hearty slow cooked meals with pulses, mushrooms and stocks and I hope you will be too.

Tastefully Yours
Louise Miller

Saturday Tasting

Our last Tasty Event was so successful we've been convinced to hold another. Join us on Saturday 30 July between 10am and 2pm where we'll be cooking up a few different foods that you may not have tasted. You'll also be able to help yourself to a few tasty bites of our latest products.

As usual, everyone will be on hand to provide helpful cooking and serving hints.

It was great being able to meet you all last time and spend time talking about favourite food hangouts and recipes. We look forward to seeing you again.

Tasting Day

The Grocer, 145 Stirling Hwy

Saturday 30 July

Anytime between 10am - 2pm

New Products

Home Baked Cookie Company. On a recent trip to Melbourne I had the great fortune to meet Carina Venturi, who started the Home Baked Cookie Company. We really love the great range of all natural cookies Carina and her husband Diego make on their property in The Yarra Valley. They only use ingredients you could find at home including free range eggs and unsalted butter (not margarine like most biscuit makers).

Try the gluten free cranberry and white chocolate – even if you're not gluten intolerant – they are delicious. Or, the Chai & Lime cookies. Mmmm.

Flageolet Beans. Flageolet beans are a staple ingredient in French winter cooking. We've always stocked the dried variety, but we have recently been able to source some in tins. The dried beans are delicious, but require hours of cooking to attain that soft texture. The tinned variety already have a lovely silky texture and can be

added straight into stews, or warmed and served as an accompaniment to lamb or beef.

Kennedy & Wilson Chocolates. Peter Wilson was a winemaker when he first tasted the famous French Valrhona chocolate. It wasn't long before he started making his own chocolate, which has been available in WA for some time.

The couverture is delicious, (not just for cooking with either) but we now have available a small selection of their handmade truffles. In flavours such as Poire William, blackcurrant and ginger, these delicate chocolates come in packs of 12 and are a perfect gift to take along to your next dinner invitation.

New Alchemy Cordial Flavours. This winter the Alchemy Chai Tea Syrup has been extremely popular as it makes a great substitute for coffee. For those still needing their caffeine fix, Alchemy Cordials have just added a chocolate coffee syrup and mint coffee syrup to their

range (the mint also goes well with hot chocolate – reminiscent of mint slice!). Divine (choc) and Cool (mint) are available in 250mL and 750mL.

Foie Gras. Vegetarians beware. We now have access to a French importer who can supply us with whole lobe duck foie gras (which I've recently discovered is considered by the French to be superior to goose foie gras). They come vacuum packed, partly poached (it's not possible to import them raw). Just give us a couple of days notice, and we can have a lobe available from our showroom.

Also look out for our new:

- Seedless grapes, tinned in syrup.
- Gluten free dried pasta from Queensland.
- The new Rangoon Racquet Club Sauces including Yellow Tandoori, Mustard Sauce and my favourite, Elephant Boy.
- Dried kalamata olives from Coriole Winery.
- 2005 new season's York Olive Oil.

I was wondering...

Cooking chocolate v's compound

Many of us are passionate about chocolate. The very passionate Swiss consume 9.6kg per capita each year. Even in Australia we each consume 4.4 kg a year.

Roald Dahl famously stated, "For the record, I prefer my chocolate straight." But what is 'straight chocolate'? The definitions of chocolate are as many and varied as the countries that grow the sought after cocoa beans.

From couverture to compound, chocolate can also be described as dark, milk, cooking, baking, bittersweet or even single estate. From the research we've done, it seems many of these descriptions overlap. Here's an overview of the basics:

Couverture, which means 'to cover', is a term applied to chocolate made only with cocoa butter (not other vegetable oils). It has a high content of cocoa butter allowing it to form a thin and even coating. To get a great gloss from this chocolate, you need to temper it first (which involves increasing and decreasing the temperature a number of times). For these reasons it is used mainly by chefs and chocolate makers.

Compound chocolate uses fats from a source other than the cocoa bean (such as vegetable oil), making it a lot cheaper to make, but leaving it with a less chocolately flavour and without the silkiness or 'mouth feel' you get from pure chocolate. It often has stabilisers added to prevent the chocolate from melting at room temperature (especially in hot climates like ours). Commercial brand chocolate usually falls into this category.

Chocolate is also described by its **cocoa mass** content (cocoa mass is basically the raw ingredient that comes from the cocoa bean). The higher the content, the darker and stronger the flavour. Anything with more than 35% cocoa can be described as 'dark'.

Milk chocolate simply has milk or milk powder added. Milk chocolate, however, can also be described as dark. The Australian made Kennedy & Wilson milk couverture contains 48% cocoa content as well as milk powder, making it a dark, milk chocolate (and it is delicious – especially when cardamom oil has been added!). **White** chocolate is made purely from cocoa butter and contains no cocoa mass – meaning that technically it's not chocolate at all.

There seems to be no universal definition of **cooking** chocolate. The brands found in supermarkets aren't always couverture (that is, they contain other vegetable oils). **Baking** or bakers chocolate is an American term that usually refers to unsweetened chocolate.

So, it's quite a complicated market out there. One thing we are sure of is that straight chocolate (that which uses the cocoa butter and not vegetable oil) is far superior. So even if you think it should only be used for cooking – don't be afraid to consume it straight from the packet!

For more info see www.chocolatebox.com.au or www.chocolatetradingco.com

What does Extra Virgin mean?

There are a variety of olive oils available today with descriptions that can sometimes be confusing.

Virgin oils are those that have not been 'processed'. That is, they have not been refined or filtered after being extracted from the olive fruit.

Extra Virgin is the description given to the highest quality of virgin olive oil with an acidity level of less than 0.8%. Virgin oil (i.e. not extra virgin) can have up to 2% acidity.

Historically, the term cold pressed was used when hand turned wooden presses extracted the first oil from the olives. However, this only extracted about 40% of the oil. Hot water was then added to the leftover olive paste and the paste pressed to extract the rest of the oil. The first oil, or cold pressed oil, was superior in colour and flavour, making it more sought after.

These days most good olive oils are extracted mechanically (although usually using a centrifuge, rather than a wooden hand press) at a temperature of less than 30° - these oils are still described as cold pressed. Often a second extraction is not

required as the centrifuge is able to extract far more oil than the old hand press.

All the oils at The Grocer are extra virgin and extra virgin oils are almost always mechanically cold pressed.

A few small producers bottle an oil that is described as 'first run' or 'free flowing'. This is the oil that runs freely from the olives before they are pressed – the weight of the olives simply pushes some of the oil out. Understandably this oil is very high in quality, and this is reflected in the price (Benza Primuruggiu is an example of an Italian free flowing oil – it has a delicate, fruity flavour).

The important thing to know is that the flavours of different extra virgin olive oils varies considerably. Oils can be bitter, fresh, grassy, buttery, and/or peppery.

These different flavours are a result of the olive variety, when the olives are picked and of course where and how they are grown. What makes a great tasting olive oil is simply a matter of your personal preference!

Upcoming Events

Must Wine Bar Cassoulet & Rhône Valley Wines

Wednesday August 24.

Staying with a French theme for winter, Must Wine Bar is hosting a great food and wine night featuring one of the most famous dishes of France, cassoulet. To create this rich, hearty stew a blend of pork, duck, Toulouse sausage and more meats, flageolet beans, aromatic vegetables and herbs are simmered together for days.

This shared feast of four courses is matched with sensational wines from the Rhone, including the sublime Vieux Télégraphe Châteauneuf Du Pape 1996. To book, call Must on 9328 8255 or check out their website for all other events www.must.com.au

Emma's Kitchen

Cherry & White Chocolate Cointreau Cake

Emma E. Pears

1/3 cup Ruby Lips sulphur free sour dried cherries
¼ cup Cointreau
3 eggs, separated
2/3 cup Billingtons Golden Caster Sugar
125g butter, unsalted
200g Callebaut white chocolate Callets/buttons
Exactly ¾ cup Moretti 00 plain flour, sifted

Soak Cherries in Cointreau for 1 hr. Heat oven to 180° C.

Line a 20cm shallow cake tin with baking paper.

Beat egg yolks with caster sugar until pale. Melt chocolate in bowl over hot water (making sure the bowl doesn't touch the water). Whisk butter into melted chocolate. Then fold chocolate mix into the yolks and sugar.

Matters of Taste

Don't have time in the evening for cooking classes? Matters of Taste have come to the rescue with their Lunch Time Classes. From midday to 1pm it's a great way to learn about two great quick and easy recipes and catch up with a friend.

To book call Matters of Taste on 9319 1097 or check out their website for a full list of classes www.mattersoftaste.com.au.

York Jazz Festival

York has been host to WA's biggest Jazz Festival since 1984. It's on again this year on the Queen's Birthday long weekend 27 to 30 September. While you're there, pop into The Ragged Robin for some lunch – we enjoyed a fantastic meal there in May.

New Outlets

Restaurants

- The Ragged Robin, York – it's worth driving to York just to have a meal here! Owner and chef, Steven Lockley, has returned from 15 years in London to do his own thing in this historic part of WA.
- Veritas, 484 Beaufort St, Highgate - just opened this is an elegant European style restaurant
- Bar One, QV1 Building, St Georges Terrace – with Stephen Scaffidi at the helm, Bar One has a renewed focus on great Italian food including Ferron rice and Martelli pasta.
- Café Moka, Mandurah Ocean Marina, Mandurah – now also open for dinner.

Retail Outlets

- Liquorice, Carine Glades Shopping Centre, Duncraig – opening soon
- In 2 WA, 37 Dolphin Drive, Mandurah – great to pick up your favourite Goan product

Using a spatula fold in the cherries and Cointreau, followed by the sifted flour. Beat the egg whites to peaks, then gently fold through the mix.

Pour into the cake tin and bake for 45 mins or until a skewer comes out clean. The cake should be slightly soft to touch. Cool before turning out.

Serve with double cream.