

The Grocer's Seasonal Newsletter

Christmas 2005

Seasons Greetings

The warmer weather has been a bit slow coming this year, but that hasn't stopped us preparing for the festive season. I love this time of year because we hardly need an excuse to invite friends to dinner and spend time creating something delicious. If you need inspiration for an upcoming dinner party don't miss our Christmas tasting on Saturday 3rd December at our showroom or check out Emma's suggestions for quick and easy party food over the page.

If it's travel tips you're after, Graham and Phillipa Baws, our predecessors at The Grocer, have included a few Italian dining experiences in their contribution on page 4.

To share another great idea with you, we recently met a customer who was getting ready for her cooking club where the members meet once a month to cook a new recipe. I really love the idea of a cooking club. I never have time to read the book for my book club, but I spend days organizing what I'm going to cook for the members when it's my turn to host!

Finally thank you to all the passionate people who continue visit our showroom. It seems that more and more people are getting into good food and we love to hear your stories about great markets, new products and new producers. It means we can share that knowledge with others and more people can support the good markets cropping up in our state – check out our market recommendations below.

If you know of any great places to shop or new ways to enjoy good food, don't hesitate to get in touch. See you at the tasting.

Have a very merry and yummy Christmas

Louise Miller

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New Outlets

Just in time for Christmas, the following stores have recently opened their doors stocking items from The Grocer:

- The Beaufort Street Merchant, 492 Beaufort St, Highgate
- Fresh Provisions Bicton, Canning Hwy, Bicton (was Qcumbers)
- Onshore Traders, 105 Dempster St, Esperance
- Deckchair Gourmet, Shop 3, 50 Blackwood Ave, Augusta
- Drummond Catering & Fine Foods, 184A Hay St, Kalgoorlie
- Somoré Gourmet Foods, 224 Safety Bay Rd, Safety Bay

Christmas Opening Hours

December

Saturday 17	9am – 5pm
Sunday 18	10am - 2pm
Mon – Thur 19 – 22	10am – 5pm
Friday 23	10am – 8pm
Saturday 24	10am – 4pm
Sunday 25 – Wed 28	Closed
Thurs, Fri 29 & 30	10am – 5pm
Saturday 31	10am – 2pm

January

Monday 2	Closed
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Christmas Tasting

Join us at the Showroom, 145 Stirling Hwy, Saturday 3 December, between 10am and 2pm

Farmers' Markets

Nothing creates the desire to spend the weekend in the kitchen more than visiting a good produce market. Wherever I've travelled, I've made a point of going to the local farmers' market – it gives you a wonderful sense of the place to see what people are growing, making and eating. You don't need to speak the language to communicate either– there's a communal understanding at a market, based around taste and enjoyment.

Some of my international favourites are:

- Perigueux, Near Bordeaux, France – Held weekly, this regional market attracts producers from the whole of the Dordogne region including specialist local cheese makers, amazing smallgoods manufacturers and passionate artisan bakers.
- Central Market, La Paz, Bolivia – While there wasn't much that inspired me to cook, the dried llama foetuses were a particular point of interest (apparently they are buried on the site of a new house before the house is built to bring good luck to the inhabitants!).
- London Borough Market, London, England – Made popular by Jamie Oliver, this amazing gourmet market is a food lovers' heaven with everything from real Spanish jamon iberico to Neals Yard Dairy, an institution that has restored hand made English cheese to its rightful place at the top of international dessert menus.
- Cortona Saturday Market, Tuscany, Italy – Cortona is a town made famous by Frances Mayes' book 'Under the Tuscan Sun'. This tiny market is typical of many small Italian towns with everything picked fresh that morning and bursting with flavour, making it easy to cook a few recipes from Frances's book.

In Australia, a few highlights are:

- The Entertainment Quarter Markets, Sydney, NSW (formerly Fox Studios Markets). Don't leave without trying Pat & Sticks Ice Cream Sandwiches.
- Barossa Valley Farmers Market, SA. The best bacon and egg sandwiches you'll ever taste.
- Yering Station Farmers Market, Yarra Valley, VIC. I'm not sure what we enjoyed most – the stunning view of the valley below or the Kennedy & Wilson's Chocolate Mousse Ice Cream!

We've got some great markets here in Perth too. They seem to be enjoying increasing support from those searching for fresh local produce:

- **Midland Farmers' Market** – Sundays from 6am for great priced seasonal fruit and veg. The Crescent, Midland (Midland's main street).
- **Mondo's Saturday Market** – for local gourmet treats including Essenza coffee and New Norcia Bread – Saturdays from 8am til 12 noon. 824 Beaufort St, Inglewood.
- **City Farm Organic Markets** – Western Australia's first certified organic market, including fresh food and other organic household items – Saturdays from 8am til 12 noon. 182 Brown St, East Perth.

Emma's Kitchen

Christmas is always hectic, so here are a few easy and delicious ways to start and end a memorable meal.

Before's

- Lightly fry chorizo slices then drizzle with De Soto Pedro Xeminez sherry vinegar.
- Add dried ground bush tomato to a meatball mix (beef or chicken) and serve with a great relish like:
 - Peter Watson Onion & Cumquat Pickle
 - Crespi Salsina Sundried Tomato Sauce
 - The Gardens Produce Heritage Tomato Chutney
- Add to unsweetened canapé cups any of the following combinations:
 - Duck rillettes with muscatels and a drop of Maletti balsamic
 - Crumbled Meredith chevré with Yarra Valley salmon caviar on top
 - Rare roast beef slices with Newman's Horseradish mixed with sour cream

- Top a Falwasser cracker with Vivid Tastes black olive or spicy green tapenade and slices of soft boiled quail egg.
- Marinate thin strips of chicken in Vivid Tastes Mokoko sauce and coconut milk, then BBQ and serve. Or mix the Vivid Tastes Mokoko sauce with sour cream for a quick and easy dip.
- Mix any Charmaine Solomon paste with light sour cream for a great dip for vegetables or meat (the Tandoori Tikka is our favourite).

After's

- Fill canapé cups with macerated strawberries and top with Alice Langton Chocolate Dipping Sauce and chocolate fairy floss.
- Choc coated ice-cream nougat balls. Crush Flamigni crunchy almond nougat and mix into a good vanilla ice-cream, then re-freeze. Use a melon baller to scoop ice cream and dip balls into melted chocolate. Freeze again. For something extra special, dab on gold or silver leaf flakes.
- Serve Pyengana cheddar with thin slices of candied clementine atop a Falwasser cracker.

I Was Wondering...

Caviar

This month we've received a number of requests for Beluga Caviar so we thought you might like to hear a bit more about these elusive eggs.

The term caviar normally refers to the unfertilised eggs of sturgeon cured in a salt solution. In the 19th century these eggs were readily available in North America and from the Caspian Sea. It wasn't long before the waters in North America were fished out and they have been farming sturgeon there ever since. Wild sturgeon are still fished in Russia and Iran but a number of countries, including Australia and just recently the U.S., have placed a ban on the import of Beluga caviar (the most sought after type of wild sturgeon caviar) as the species is endangered.

Other types of sturgeon (Oscietra and Sevruga) are fished in Russia and Iran producing slightly different tasting caviar. The flavour of the berries (the common name for the eggs) also differs depending on where the fish are caught (in Russia the fish are caught up stream, in Iran in open water). In fact, there are many varying descriptions of the flavours of each type of caviar, some completely contradictory to each other – it's obviously a matter of personal taste. Here's a general summary:

Beluga – this is the largest and rarest sturgeon, producing the largest eggs that are light grey in colour with a subtle, creamy and nutty flavour.

Oscietra - is a smaller fish that produces smaller eggs. The eggs are brown or gold in colour with a stronger flavour.

Sevruga – The smallest of the three sturgeon, this fish produces eggs that are around 2mm in diameter of a dark grey colour. Some sources refer to this caviar as being the strongest in flavour and therefore much sought after.

Fresh Iranian Osceitra and Sevruga caviar is available to order from The Grocer along with farmed North American caviar, which is considered by the importer to be superior to wild caught Iranian because of its delicate flavour.

Salmon caviar from Australia's Yarra Valley and Flying Fish Roe are other sought after fish eggs. The salmon roe berries are much larger than sturgeon and burst deliciously in your mouth when eaten. The flying fish roe is much smaller with a very mild flavour – often the berries are infused with other flavours like wasabi. Both are available from The Grocer.

New Products

Edourd Artzner duck and goose rillettes and liver pates

These beautifully packaged little jars have been recommended by Arnaud Courtin from York Olive Oil Company – a Frenchman with pretty good taste! Best served the traditional French way; on a crusty baguette with cornichons.

Peter Watson Stuffings

Ready to go stuffing for your Christmas birds. Delicious when mixed with a little goose fat (did you know goose fat has less saturated fat than butter!). Fig & hazelnut, lemon & parsley or cranberry and thyme.

Alchemy Blender Benders

Available in 750mL bottles, or in gift packs, these cocktail mixers are just as good as the Alchemy all natural cordials. Simply add your favourite alcohol and blend with ice. Choose from Cosmopolitan, Dacquari, Pina Colada or Margarita.

Ham and Lamb Jam

What a fantastic idea from the creator of the Vivid Tastes range – these jams are the perfect accompaniment for cold meats. Don't be fooled by the name, they don't actually contain any lamb or ham. The lamb jam is a

combination of mint, apple and rosemary. The ham jam a delicious blend of sour cherries, honey, mustard and ginger. They also make a great glaze for roasted meats.

MacNuts Macadamia Oil

With a smoking point of over 200° C and the lowest saturated fat content of any oil, including extra virgin olive oil, macadamia oil makes a versatile cooking oil. It has a very delicate flavour so is great for pan frying delicate fish or sweet things like French toast or pancakes.

A Word From Philippa & Graham

It didn't take much persuasion to agree to write a few words for the upcoming Newsletter. Although we've been away from the business for three-quarters of a year, naturally THE GROCER remains our preferred food store and we call in to keep our larder stocked with essentials.

After twelve years in the business, it was both timely and opportune to find successors in Louise and Andy Miller. While Philippa was there right at the beginning, you might find it of interest to know the other identities involved in the early days. In 1992 Kingsley and Chrissie Sullivan owned and operated 'The Gourmet Grocer' in Wembley. Philippa found this great deli and was an early customer. Discussions with Kingsley led to Philippa selling some of the wholesale products he had secured, including a range from Sydney company 'The Essential Ingredient'.

The business moved through several stages, and the storage facility, originally the boot of Philippa's car, changed to a lock-up unit near Homebase and then some shared office space until Larry Silby, owner of 'Chelsea Pizza' and related to Kingsley, made the property next to the restaurant available. In the process becoming a shareholder in the fledgling business known as 'The Gourmet Grocer Wholesale Services'. Quite a mouthful for a small fine food company.

The Sullivan's growing business signalled their commitment elsewhere and Philippa and Graham subsequently became the sole owners of the business. Given the development of 'New Norcia Bakeries' over those years, it's easy to see what that commitment meant!

We decided early on to reduce the mouthful to a more readily digestible name. The notice we sent out to our customers announced '60% OFF - OUR NAME'. Of the five words, we deleted three and finished up with 'THE GROCER'.

Whilst we still have an interest in the food and hospitality industry, today it's more virtual than real, although of course we still enjoy good food and wine. Probably the most important food category we stocked at THE GROCER was the range of Italian foods we distributed for Enoteca Sileno of Melbourne. With such an interest in foods Italian, when we planned our first major holiday in a long time, the venue just had to be Italy.

In early June we left for London, cramming in reunions with our families and friends, visiting both Devon and Cornwall. We even made it to Rick Stein's restaurant in Padstow, locally known as Padstein for the many businesses the chef-turned-magnate owns there. The fish was first class.

At the end of June we scrambled aboard a Ryan Air jet bound for Turin. The flight was the most turbulent

either of us had ever experienced, and possibly one of the flight attendants too. When we finally landed in Turin, he was so shaken, he welcomed us all to London! It was almost midnight when we exited the airport, only to find that buses and trains into the city had long since ceased operating.

Philippa, quick to trial her newly-learned Italian, asked a suave and handsome gentleman standing next to two large suitcases how we might get into Turin. He instructed us to look after his suitcases, and he'd be back. He didn't look like a terrorist, so we obeyed his instructions and he returned a few minutes later with a large capacity taxi. Great! We piled in and he instructed the driver to take him to his home but via our hotel. We chatted en route, and as we pulled up at our hotel we proffered some Euros. He refused to take any, commenting that we were here for a month, would no doubt have some poor experiences in Italy, and he wanted to start us off with a good one! We thought this was a delightful gesture but so pleased to report that he was wrong.

The Ristorante del Cambio dates from 1757 and is an institution in Turin. Over the centuries it's been the de facto seat of Government. It was recommended to us and one look at the furnishings and menu made me worry that we'd blow our month's budget on the first night. In spite of that, we booked, returned later and entered the bar. Just one other party was there and preceded us into the restaurant. As they passed, a woman turned to Philippa and said in a strong Italian accent, 'I know you'. Philippa smiled, she said it often happens. 'No, I never forget a face'. By calculating the several degrees of separation, it turned out that she lives in Perth and is a customer of THE GROCER!

As a frequent visitor to the restaurant, she instructed the head waiter to sit us under the clock at the very head of the restaurant. We felt somewhat conspicuous. In spite of the formal placing and surroundings, the staff couldn't have been friendlier. The waiter actually recommended a less expensive wine than I had chosen and one that he felt would better suit the dishes we'd ordered.

In all we stayed in several regions; in Piedmonte, in Liguria, and spent a week in Tuscany. We also took several hundred digital photos, all fascinating of course. Our food focus was on Slow Food restaurants, and we tracked down several.

Meanwhile, our life in Perth has regained a composure and routine. Graham is working as a freelance accountant, his old profession, not the oldest profession. Philippa maintains a full diary and is quietly planning another holiday. If there is anyone in need of some restaurant recommendations for their next visit to Italy, we'd be more than happy to share our experiences, contact us at baws@iprimus.com.au.

Ciao.