

Jan-Jun 2010 Spirit House Newsletter

IN THIS ISSUE . . .

A new cook book is on the way and we take you behind the scenes of our photo shoot. New chefs, new food tours and some recipes for you to try at home that will please any coeliacs in your life.

Plus a list of stockists where you can find Spirit House food products.

RESTAURANT

Open every day for lunch

Dinner - Wednesday to Saturday

Fully Licensed, Bookings essential.

Call: (07) 5446 8994

COOKING SCHOOL

Hands-on cooking classes are held everyday from 9.30AM to 2.00PM.

Evening classes are held most Fridays & Saturdays from 4.30pm to 9.00pm.

Classes can be booked online at www.spirithouse.com.au

Phone: (07) 5446 8977

GIFT VOUCHERS

Spirit House Gift Vouchers make the perfect present. Vouchers can be used in the restaurant, cooking school or shop. Go to spirithouse.com.au/vouchers to order your voucher online or call the office on 07 5446 8977.

COOKING THE BOOKS



Why they don't give a Booker prize to cook book authors is a literary mystery. Seriously, if you're going to write a novel all you have to do is create a story that makes sense - you know - a beginning, a middle, followed by a big finish. Cook books on the other hand, undergo far more scrutiny than a Tolstoy novel. If Tolstoy left a detail out of a Russian battle scene with Napoleon, no-one would notice. But leave the fish sauce out of a curry recipe and just see what happens!

So when we received a phone call from our publishers asking if we'd like to write a third recipe book, it was like getting the news that you're pregnant again - unexpectedly. A tingle of excitement, followed by a tight feeling of apprehension and the realisation that 'there goes my life for the next nine months'. Which is exactly where chef Annette Fear and owner Helen Brierty found themselves earlier this year - pouring over recipes and bouncing around text and theme ideas.

Then came the labourious task of designing and testing each of 200 recipes, measuring ingredients and re-writing methods so you could make sense of the recipes at home and be confident the dish will taste and look like the photograph.

A cook book author's delight is in the stunning photos of their recipes. The reason the average home cook can struggle to present a recipe matching the photo is because they're basically lacking a qualified chef, a gifted food stylist, a cameraman with thirty years experience in food photography, plus \$60,000 worth of lighting and camera equipment.

In July, armed with a room full of different style plates and Asian props, we closed the cooking school for a week while Sydney cameraman Graeme Gillies, Noosa food stylist Jaimie Reyes and our three chefs, Katrina, Kelly and Annette, prepped, cooked, styled and photographed over 80 dishes.

Observing Jaimie at work was like watching an artist in front of a canvas - fine strands of red chili were tweaked with tweezer precision around the final dish, glycerine was delicately brushed onto green herbs to make the leaves glisten, caramel painted onto meat to darken the colour. Toothpicks created a scaffolding at the back of the dish to hold tomatoes in place or to prop up garnishes at impossible angles.

Lighting was adjusted to create just the right amount of fill and give perfect highlights. Over 1000 photos were shot straight into Graeme's computer, after which he spent two weeks in his office choosing the best shots of each recipe, balancing the colour, accentuating the details and creating a finished image guaranteed to make a reader salivate and go 'wow'. The final test will be in your tasting - the book is scheduled for launch around Australia in April 2010.



Jaimie makes fine adjustments with tweezers while Graeme waits patiently.



Salad dressing is thickened and painted on in just the right spots to catch reflections and depth.

Gluten Free

COELIAC - KING OF THE ALLERGIES

Aretaeus of Cappadocia, was a pretty smart guy - he wrote a treatise way back in the second century which accurately described in great detail diseases and their various symptoms. In particular, he is famous for his diagnosis of Coeliac Disease - from Greek *κοιλιακός* *koiliakos*, 'abdominal'. So that explains the crazy spelling of Coeliac, or Celiac which is the more phonetic way of spelling it.

Practically every day, restaurant guests and class participants ask our chefs about suitable recipes for coeliac disease or gluten intolerance.

Generally Thai food is fine for coeliacs or people with gluten allergies, because wheat and other gluten-containing grains are not traditionally grown or used in Thai cuisine.

Also interesting is the fact that gluten intolerance appears to be a genetic disease and people from Asia and Africa are rarely diagnosed with it.

Gluten is used in some unexpected ways, for example as a stabilizing agent or thickener in products like ice-cream and ketchup.

So you need to be careful when using processed

pastes or sauces in your cooking - especially when it comes to soy based sauces which are fermented with wheat.

Soy sauce can be easily replaced with Japanese Tamari sauce, a soy sauce which is fermented with rice, rather than wheat or barley. To recreate the flavour of kecap manis, or sweet soy sauce, just use tamari with a generous addition of shaved palm sugar. Other Asian sauces to avoid are oyster sauce and yellow bean sauce.

Fortunately fish sauce, absolutely essential for Thai cooking, is made by fermenting tiny salted fish to produce the characteristic salty element which balances all Thai dishes. Other key Thai ingredients like shrimp paste, tamarind and roasted chilli paste pose no gluten allergy problems.

It's Chinese food that gives coeliacs the most headaches, because while we think of Chinese as eating a lot of rice, it's gluten containing grains like wheat and barley that feature heavily in their cuisine - noodles, dumplings, spring roll wrappers etc.

Wheat flour products like noodles and spring

roll wrappers can be avoided by using similar products made with rice flour. Fresh and dried rice noodles are popular in soups and stir fries, and dried rice paper wrappers are simply soaked in hot water to make fresh spring rolls.

So stock up your pantry with palm sugar, fish sauce, tamari and a few other key ingredients like tamarind paste, red curry paste or roasted chilli paste and the only extra ingredients you need to make fabulous Thai food at home are fresh herbs, aromatics, vegetables, meat or seafood.

And here's the great news - when you see gluten free it doesn't mean flavour free. Unlike vegetarians, coeliacs are on the top of the food chain - so meat and seafood are in, bread and wheat noodles are out.

The cooking school chefs will offer an Asian gluten free class each month in 2010 - see class schedule for dates - and whether you're gluten intolerant or not, these recipes will make a great addition to your Thai food repertoire.

Steamed Rice Dumplings

stuffed with pork and peanuts

Filling:

- 4 cloves garlic
- ¼ cup chopped coriander root
- ½ tspn white peppercorns
- 250 grams pork mince
- 3 tblspns fish sauce
- 2 tblspns light palm sugar
- 24 small dry rice papers
- ½ cup coarsely crushed roasted peanuts
- ½ cup coriander leaves to garnish

soft lettuce leaves

red vinegar for dipping

Make a paste with the garlic, coriander and white pepper.

In a bowl dissolve the palm sugar in the fish sauce and then add the pork mince and the paste. Mix together.

Soak the rice papers in a bowl of warm water until just softened. Place a teaspoon of the pork filling in the centre and fold into a package.

Line steamer with banana leaf or sheet of grease proof paper and steam over a wok. Serve on a platter with the lettuce leaves, coriander leaves and peanuts.

The dumpling are wrapped in the lettuce along with the coriander and peanuts.

Serve the red vinegar sauce on the side.



Fold the top over the mix first, then both sides.



Lift the dumpling and roll it over in your fingers so the rice paper wraps around the dumpling.



Restaurant News

Master Chef Vs. Master Cook

The big surprise TV hit of 2009 was 'Master Chef'. Millions of people tuned in to watch would-be cooks battle it out to become a Master Chef. Those of us in this industry sarcastically thought the real winners were the contestants who were voted out early and could get on with their lives!

So when Master Chef judge, Matt Preston, dropped in to Spirit House for a chat on behalf of Delicious food magazine, we certainly had a lot to talk about.

Restaurant and Caterer Magazine also took the TV show to task saying it should have been called Master Cook, not Master Chef, because so many viewers will now think that all it takes to be a top chef is to cook a couple of dishes for some judges. They also felt that the title totally negates a chef's 4 year apprenticeship and years of hard slog serving dozens of different menu items to hundreds of diners in a couple of hours.

Which brings me back to the 'sarcastic' comment: cooking for a dinner party with friends over a few hours is very different to cooking for a restaurant full of guests, where your money and your reputation is on the line. Then having to prep it all up and repeat the process the next day, then the next, and the next ... you get the idea.

Matt Preston was charming, delightful, witty and urbane (that should be worth a brownie point or two). And as we discussed the merits of the show, one thing we agreed is that shows like Master Chef help people see cooking as a career, not just a job that you take when you don't great grades at school.

Interestingly, the final contestants all owned vast libraries of cook books compared to most of the thousands of contestants who auditioned for the show.

Indeed, one question we ask chefs who apply to work at Spirit House is 'What cookbooks do you own?' Someone who invest in building a library on a subject is obviously passionate about the contents.

Just as in real life, there's people who want to cook and then there are those, like Julie, last year's winner, who have a truly special skill.

Which leads to an interesting point: regardless of who you think should have won, each chef has a different talent. The hugely creative chef may abhor and fail at the routine of function work. The opposite is also true - we've had chefs here who barely raise a sweat if 80 people walk into the restaurant at once but they couldn't write a great menu to save themselves. The creative chef who likes to fiddle over their dishes turning them into works of art is not suited to a busy lunch time bistro. In other words, part of being a successful chef is finding the right restaurant or venue that utilises your best talents and skills.

So while Master Chef may not turn a cook into a chef, it's a huge step in the right direction. Because you can't teach passion. When you look at some of the big name chefs in Australia, you quickly find that they didn't start out as apprentice chefs, they just had an all absorbing passion for fine food - Neil Perry, David Thompson, Stephanie Alexander, Maggie Beer - including our own Cooking School chef, Annette Fear.

In fact the most successful restaurant chain on the planet doesn't even employ chefs - McDonalds employs kids! The same teenagers that you can't get to clean their rooms can create food that generates billions of dollars in revenues - there's hope for us all.



Matt was more than happy to pose with three of his biggest fans, Tara, Vera and Stacey.



The kids in the kitchen were equally delighted to meet Matt.

NEW HEAD CHEF

For the past two years, our kitchen team has been headed by Damien Ryan. Then an opportunity too good to miss fell into Damien's lap - he and wife, Sandy, purchased Gridley Homestead B&B in Eumundi (www.gridley.com.au). So Damien has hung up his woks and can now be found welcoming guests and cooking great breakfasts at their charming old Queenslander, just walking distance from the famous Eumundi markets.

Just as we start worrying about Damien's replacement, an email pops into our inbox from Ben Bertei. Talk about good timing! Having worked with Martin Boetz at Longrain in Melbourne, Ben Bertei has been lured by the Sunshine Coast lifestyle and is hoping to bring new inspiration to the Spirit House kitchen.



With Ben's focus on delicate knife work and finesse of flavours, the work load in the kitchen certainly has increased, but as Ben puts it "with so many raw ingredients which play a major part in Thai food available from local farmers, you don't want guests chewing on pieces of lemongrass or kaffir lime - they should be sliced so fine that they become a flavour, rather than just a texture". Come and taste the difference next time you're visiting the Coast.

Tips & Tours

New Tours for September 2010

It is often said that a holiday consists of three components - planning the tickets and accommodation, the actual trip itself, and then relating your adventures and showing photos to friends when you return home. A cynical traveller would comment that the last component is often the most enjoyable!

When it comes to Spirit House Thai tag-along food tours, the more time we give you to plan the ticket/accommodation part, the quicker our tours fill up. As to the trip itself, we guarantee you will see a side of Thailand rarely experienced by the average tourist - and that your friends will not glaze over with boredom when you later regale them with details and pass the photos around.

So, given that our March 2010 tours booked out six months in advance, we are allowing you plenty of notice for the next scheduled tours in September 2010 - which gives you time to pay off your credit card and book some cheap flights.

For most people travelling to Thailand, after a few days in Bangkok they head off to Chiang Mai or down to the beaches. Over four days, Spirit House tours explore not only the food, but also the culture, and feature two nights in the ancient capital of Ayutthaya.

During the first day we explore the early city of Bangkok, wandering down back alleyways to watch buddhas being carved and hand painted - all the while tasting a myriad of unique food from the street vendors we pass.

Day two we travel up river to Koh Kret, an island home of the Mon tribe who dominated central Thailand in the 6th and 10th centuries. Their tiny island is now famous for its unique pottery and food delicacies.

After an early morning snacking around Koh Kret, we drive to Ayutthaya for two nights at a boutique resort overlooking rice fields. At Ayutthaya, visit a local produce market and learn how to make Persian fairy floss, explore the ancient temples, relax with a massage in the resort, indulge in a private cooking class and enjoy sunset drinks in the temple ruins. And if you're an early riser, join the resort staff at dawn as they make their daily food offerings to the local monks.

On our final day, a long tail boat takes us down river to an old Portuguese settlement dating back to the 1600s and to visit the King's summer palace before driving back to Bangkok.

Tour Dates:

27th to 30th August, 2010

3rd to 6th September, 2010

8th to 11th September, 2010

We will be in Thailand late February to confirm the final itinerary and price so please check www.spirithouse.com.au/tours for details then.

All tours are limited to 8 people and led by a Spirit House chef and guide.



Your home in Ayutthaya overlooking canals and rice paddies

INSTANT GIFT VOUCHERS

It seemed so easy at the time - let's create a way for customers to buy a gift voucher online and have it emailed to them instantly. Then the 'what ifs' start creeping in - what if they lose it, or can't open the email, or delete the email?

So many days and hundreds of lines of code later (see the picture on the left for just a snippet of what's involved writing code) you can now get your vouchers delivered to your in-box - ready for you to print or forward to the lucky recipient.

Perfect for that last minute gift!

TOP TIPS!

Become a master chef in your kitchen with some of our cooking school chefs' top tips, tricks and techniques.



Fine Chopping : Use your knuckles as a guide - if you look down on your hand and you can see your finger nails then you're a few slices away from losing something.



Peeling Garlic : Place a few cloves in a mortar and *lightly* pound them with the pestle - peeling is much easier and cloves stay intact. Much faster than using the flat blade of your knife.



Peeling Ginger : The best way to peel ginger is with a tea spoon exactly like in the photo above. Trust us, it works much better than a western style peeler.



Chopping Lemongrass : Bash lemongrass with a pestle up and down the fleshy part of the stalk. This makes it much easier to slice, pound and chop.



Is it Worth It?



BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU . . . DRINK!

Governments are happy to use alcohol as a lucrative tax revenue base, but they're not happy if you get too happy while drinking.

Now you think you'd be able to spot a Liquor License inspector - they would come up to your table, flash their ID, question you on how much you've had to drink, interrogate your adult children for their date of birth - demand identification, proof of age and threaten you with horrendous fines.

But with such a variety of licensed venues and the government reluctant to part with funds, how do you police each venue?

EASY - conscript Inspectors. The good thing about conscripts is that they have no choice and they're free.

And that's exactly the role waiters, bar staff and their managers are now forced to adopt when working in the hospitality industry. The government doesn't pay them - instead it charges staff to attend training courses to learn how to identify a customer who's had too much to drink or shouldn't be allowed to drink.

But instead of giving the staff an incentive to enforce these laws, the government then fines them for each and every breach.

You'd think that the onus should fall on the consumer, not the unlucky conscript serving the drinks!

And when it comes to fines, we're not talking petty amounts. The penalties for serving a customer in breach of the government's guidelines are \$8,000 for the waiter, and up to \$37,500 for the manager! The happy drinker gets off with a fine varying from \$2,500 to \$6,000!

Because waiters have to enforce these laws, they are now in the business of protecting people from themselves.

All kidding aside - the responsible service of alcohol laws (RSA) are also in place to protect innocent victims of people who are under the influence. Getting drink drivers off the road is certainly a good thing and any licensed premise is happy to do its part to prevent this.

In particular there is one part of the law that causes the most problems between wait-staff and customers - it's the underage drinking law. As you probably know, it's illegal to sell or SERVE alcohol to anyone under the age of 18.

Part of the RSA training guidelines states that if a person looks to be under 25 then you should ask them for ID. With the holiday season nearly upon us, there are plenty of families who want to celebrate and if you have late teen or early 20s children it would be wise to have them bring legal ID with them whenever you dine out.

There's no point in getting upset if a waiter refuses to serve alcohol to your 23 year old daughter if she can't produce ID. A licensing inspector would also insist on ID and if it couldn't be shown then the inspector would not allow alcohol to be served.

Upholding these laws is a thankless job and staff take no pleasure at all in becoming the government's policemen but the fines are too large for waiters to risk serving anyone who looks under 18. In fact, it ruins their night as well as yours.



"A LIFE OF TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE"

Back a few years ago when the book 'Rich Dad, Poor Dad' was a hit, I remember paying the game 'Cashflow'. It was like life - you chose a profession and started buying property, investing and balancing debt.

The profession that most people desired were the big paying ones - doctor, lawyer etc. But these came with a price: uni debts, big credit card debt, and large mortgages. Ironically, the easiest way to become debt free, and cashflow positive, was to start out with jobs that didn't require a degree - while waiter wasn't an option it is the sort of profession that can win the cashflow game.

With a full time waiter earning about \$800 a week it's not a bad profession. You can buy property with that or invest in shares. And you don't have to wait years to get your degree to start earning. But let's be honest, a couple of hundred more dollars a week would be nice - and smart waiters can get that through tips.

It's easy to dismiss waiting as a serious career choice but in Europe it is a respected profession.

In Australia, working as a waiter seems to be the sort of job you do while waiting for a better job. However with flexible working hours and a sort after skill set, being a waiter can set you up for a life of travel and adventure.

This is our long winded response to the young boy in the restaurant who announced to his mother he wanted to be a waiter when he grew up - his mother, of course, told him he was going to go to university and get a real job.

YOU ARE GOING TO GO TO UNI

AND GET A REAL JOB

Working in hospitality may not be the most glamorous career at the lower levels but some of our chefs are working in the top restaurants in Europe and ex floor staff are managing restaurants and boutique hotels in Asia. And let's be honest, since when does your job define you as a person. From degrees in psychology, serial travellers to successful entrepreneurs - there's a wealth and diversity of interests, hobbies and knowledge that for 8 hours a day is quietly suppressed while our floor staff perform their job.

Where to Find Us

SPIRIT HOUSE PRODUCTS COMING TO A FREEZER NEAR YOU

Over the past year, the sales team from our food processing factory has been working hard to get Spirit House products into good food stores around S.E. Queensland.

With shelf space and in particular, freezer space, at a premium in most outlets, the Spirit House products have to battle it out against other frozen products on display.

Preservative-free, the full range of Spirit House products require quite a bit of freezer space so most vendors only stock part of our range. This led to frustration for our customers trying to buy our pastes at a stockist only to find they stocked our Spirit House spice-cream but not the paste.

As a result, we are rolling out dedicated Spirit House freezers to outlets who want to carry our full range.

This will make it much easier for you to source your favourite Spirit House paste, curry, soup or ice cream at good food stores near you.



Pastes

Curry Meals

Meals for One

Soups & Finger Food

Spice Creams

S.E.Qld Stockists

Ascot	—	Sirianni's Ascot
Aspley	—	Zonefresh Aspley
Benowa	—	Benowa Gardens Butcher
Bli Bli	—	IGA Bli Bli
Bowen	—	IGA Magees Bowen
Brassall	—	IGA Supa Brassall
Bribie Island	—	IGA Banksia Beach
Bribie Island	—	IGA Bongaree
Brookfield	—	Brookfield General Store
Buderim	—	Fenwick's Emporium
Byron Bay	—	IGA, Byron Bay
Byron Bay	—	Red Ginger
Caloundra	—	IGA - Luke's Supa Caloundra
Camp Hill	—	The Fig Tree Deli
Cannon Hill	—	Zonefresh Cannon Hill
Carindale	—	Fancee Fruits
Chapel Hill	—	Simon's Gourmet Gallery
Clayfield	—	Clayfield Markets
Cleveland	—	IGA Cleveland
Coolum	—	IGA - Luke's Coolum
Cooroy	—	IGA - Luke's Cooroy
Doonan	—	Fruits of Noosa
East Brisbane	—	IGA East Brisbane
Eight Mile Plains	—	Plenty Continental Deli
Emerald	—	IGA Emerald
Forest Glen	—	Forest Glen Convenience Store
Fortitude Valley	—	Fine Fruit on James
Fortitude Valley	—	Prime Specialty Meats
Glass House Mountains	—	IGA Glass House Mountains
Graceville	—	Superior Fruits
Greenslopes	—	Rock N Roll Market Place
Gympie	—	IGA Gympie
Kenmore	—	Ingredients
Kenmore	—	James Connoisseur Meats
Kenmore	—	The Boutique Butcher
Maleny	—	IGA Maleny
Manly West	—	Susan's Fine Food
Maroochydore	—	IGA Duggans
Milton	—	IGA Milton Village
Montville	—	IGA X'Press Montville
Mooloolah	—	IGA Mooloolah
Morningside	—	Feast on Fruit & Delicatessen
Mt Coolum	—	IGA Mt Coolum
Mt Gravatt East	—	Crisp on Creek Fruit Market
Nambour Heights	—	Wild about Fruit
New Farm	—	IGA New Farm
New Farm	—	Spoon Delicatessen
Noosa Junction	—	IGA Luke's Supa Noosa Junction
Noosa Junction	—	Noosa Junction Seafood Market
Noosaville	—	Belmondos Fresh Food Market
Paddington	—	Fresh @ Central
Pomona	—	IGA Pomona
Rainbow Beach	—	IGA Rainbow Beach
Rosalie	—	Rosalie Gourmet Market
Southport	—	Ferry Rd Markets
Taringa	—	Mrs Flannery's Taringa
The Gap	—	Zonefresh The Gap
Tugun	—	Foodworks Tugun Beach
Warana	—	B Fresh at Warana Markets
Windsor	—	Zonefresh Windsor
Woombye	—	IGA Woombye
Wynnum	—	Mrs Flannery's Wynnum
Yandina	—	IGA Yandina
Yeronga	—	Clancy James
Yeronga	—	The Village Harvest Fruit & Veg