

Jan to June 2012



# SPIRIT HOUSE

## Restaurant & Cooking School

**Why are chillies hot and how to put out the fire ?**

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### THE REAL PRICE OF FOOD

If you had to grow and prepare all the food your family eats you would be eating lots of salads, whole fruits and vegetables. Throw in a few chooks and possibly a goat or cow and you have eggs, milk, cheese, yoghurt and butter added to your diet. A simple bee-hive would give more honey than you know what to do with. In short, your in-take of processed foods would be minimal.

A visit to the Rockcote factory in Yandina, where the owners have planted a vegetable garden for their staff's use and to the Yandina Community Permaculture Garden demonstrate how easy it is to grow your own fresh food and how the prices we pay for our food are counter-intuitive.

For example: you pay around the same price for a loaf of processed sliced bread, as for a head of fresh lettuce.

Think about that for a minute: wheat seeds are sown, crop harvested, transported to a mill, ground to flour, shipped to a factory, turned into dough, baked into bread.

Lastly, it's packaged and transported yet again to a supermarket. Surely this loaf of bread should be more expensive than a fresh lettuce. And equally, a bottle of soft drink should cost more than a bottle of water.

While it's an amazing testament to modern technology that processed foods and drinks can be so cheap, we're paying a price for this - and it's not financial. The ingredients used to preserve food, enhance taste and reduce costs can take a toll on our health.

Vegetable gardens springing up across Australia, stimulate people to grow some of their own food - it's cheap and enjoyable to do. (Spirit House has just commenced planning an Asian kitchen garden for the back of the restaurant). Planting a garden and growing just a few vegetables means more exercise, lower fresh food costs and getting back to healthy food basics - sounds like just what we need in our industrious world.

### WHAT'S COOKING AT THE SCHOOL?

Recently a student in a cooking class was surprised to discover that the teacher was also a qualified chef. We've been conducting classes for 14 years now and just assumed that everyone was aware our teachers are consummate professional chefs with impressive culinary pedigrees. So in this newsletter we're proud to re-introduce you to our three teaching chefs.

For 2012, the chefs have created some new classes and added new recipes to some of their old favourites. As well, we've listened

to your feedback and reduced the class size to 16 people - more space, more time for the chef to teach you new techniques.

With class recipes now in a bound folder, you will also receive a souvenir of your class - a printed cotton Spirit House apron (value \$25.) At \$150 per four hour class - which includes lunch/dinner and wine - Spirit House's cooking school is still one of Australia's best value food experiences.

### COOKING SCHOOL

Hands-on cooking classes, a great way to make new friends and learn new skills.

**Classes:** EVERYDAY  
9.30AM TO 2.00PM.

FRI & SAT. EVENINGS  
4.30PM TO 9.00PM.

**Bookings:** SPIRITHOUSE.COM.AU/SCHOOL  
OR PH: (07) 5446 8977 (EXT 1)

### RESTAURANT

A small slice of Asia on the doorstep of the Sunshine Coast.

**Lunch:** EVERYDAY FROM NOON.

**Dinner:** WED TO SAT FROM 6PM

**Bookings:** PH: (07) 5446 8994 (EXT 2)

### 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](http://spirithouse.com.au/vouchers) to buy your voucher online or call the office on 07 5446 8977.

# Chilli Jam

## Roasted Chilli Jam

The Miracle Ingredient

Chilli paste, or chilli jam as it also called, is one of the most versatile ingredients used in Thai cooking. Salad dressings, stir fries, tom yum soups - a dash of this fantastic paste adds depth to them all. Cooking School chef, Kelly Lord, has created a class of 4 recipes which illustrate the versatility of chilli paste.

The chilli jam you make in Kelly's class is very close in taste and texture to the brand we describe in the article on the right. So for the recipe below, don't worry about making your own chilli jam, just buy a jar of Pantai Norasingh brand chilli paste in soya bean oil.



### Stir-fried Chicken

with Chilli Paste & Cashews

- 2 tablespoons** ..... vegetable oil
- 4-6** ..... medium dried chillies, optional
- 6 cloves** ..... garlic, peeled and pounded to a coarse paste
- 2** ..... golden shallots, or half a small onion, peeled and sliced
- 400 gms** ..... chicken breast or thigh, cut into stir-frying strips
- 1 tablespoon** ..... roasted chilli paste
- 1 tablespoon** ..... oyster sauce
- 1 tablespoon** ..... fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon** ..... light palm sugar
- ½ cup roasted** ..... unsalted cashews
- 4** ..... spring onions, including some of the green tops, cut into 5 cm pieces
- coriander sprigs to garnish**

Place the oil in a wok and heat to medium. Add the chillies and fry briefly until they start to darken. Remove and drain on paper towel. Set aside.

Add the garlic to the oil and cook until just starting to colour. Raise the heat to high and add the golden shallots and chicken strips, stirring constantly for about 2 minutes.

Now add the chilli paste, oyster sauce, fish sauce and palm sugar. (You may need to add a tablespoon or so of water if the sauce reduces too quickly.)

Stir-fry for a few more minutes until the chicken is cooked and, lastly, stir through the cashews, green spring onions and fried chillies. Transfer to serving plate and garnish with coriander sprigs.



## CHILLI JAM

### FIT FOR A HEADLESS HERO

Just before you race out and buy all the ingredients to make your own chilli jam, you should know two things that Thai's know well.

1: Most Thais buy their chilli jam rather than make it. This is because there are some fantastic branded roast chilli jams in the supermarkets. The most common and famous is 'Pantai Norasingh' brand.



2: Pantai Norasingh is a Thai folk hero. He was an oarsman for the king in the Ayutthaya period – around 1707 – and was tasked with steering the King's royal barge on a trip which, as you will see, was a fate far worse than being the oarsman when the king wanted to go waterskiing! Notice the logo of the royal barge on the jar label. In a particularly twisty bend in the river, Norasingh accidentally crashed the boat causing great discomfort to the king.

For breaking the King's boat and disturbing his sleep there are steep prices to be paid – and it wasn't with a jar of chilli jam. According to royal decree, the penalty was Norasingh's head, because he had failed in his duties. The king thought this was a bit harsh because the river was hard to navigate. But, and this is what the Thai's love about this legend, Norasingh begged for the king to behead him. He thought that one exception would cause people to no longer respect the king or royal laws.

So go ahead if you want and make your own roasted chilli jam. But for a dinner conversation ice-breaker, buy the Pantai Norasingh jar and relate the story of Norasingh – and thus teach your children about loyalty, duty and honor.

## DROP-DEAD EASY RECIPE TO GLAM UP A COOKED CHOOK

Let's be honest, it's so much easier dropping in to Woolies and grabbing a cooked chook than firing up your oven and doing it from scratch. But, if you're like us, it kind of feels like you're taking the easy way out. So here's chef Annette Fear's drop-dead easy way of turning a cooked chook into a fantastic Asian chicken salad. The only cooking you need to do is heat the sauce in a pan, the rest is simply chopping some raw ingredients that you can grab from the vegetable aisle at your nearest supermarket.

### Chicken Salad with Tamarind Sauce

#### For the Tamarind Sauce

- 3 tablespoons ... palm sugar
- 2 tablespoons ... fish sauce
- ½ cup ..... thick tamarind water or puree (should be as thick as pouring cream)

#### For The Salad

- 1 cooked BBQ chicken
- 1 quantity of Tamarind Sauce
- 2 stalks ..... lemongrass, trimmed of tough outer leaves and only bottom half used, slice very thinly
- 2 tablespoons ... ginger, peeled and finely shredded
- 2 ..... golden shallots or ½ red onion, thinly sliced
- 4 ..... kaffir lime leaves, thinly sliced
- 1 ..... large red chilli, finely sliced into rounds, deseeding optional

freshly squeezed lime juice to finish

lettuce leaves to line plate

handful of coriander leaves to garnish

#### To Make the Tamarind Sauce

Combine all ingredients in a small saucepan and cook over a moderate heat until the sugar has dissolved. Cool

#### To Assemble the Salad

Shred cooked chicken into small pieces. Place in a bowl with one quantity of the tamarind sauce, lemongrass, ginger, shallots, lime leaves, chilli. Adjust the level of tartness with a squeeze of lime juice. Toss to mix. Transfer to serving plate lined with the lettuce leaves, sprinkle on the coriander leaves as garnish.

Why make things harder than they have to be? A cooked chook can be the foundation for an amazing Asian-inspired chicken salad in just a few minutes



# MOUTH ON FIRE?

## HOW TO SOOTHE THE PAIN

There's one thing you need to know if you've eaten something spicy and your mouth is on fire: the molecule that causes the burn in chilli – capsaicin – is a fatty acid. Therefore it won't dissolve in water so drinking water is useless.

Capsaicin, tricks the nerves on your tongue into telling your brain your mouth is on fire. So to soothe the pain you need to neutralise the capsaicin or get a signal to your brain that your mouth is actually cold.

Ice counteracts the chemical effect from the chilli on your tongue, sending signals to your brain that you are no longer on fire.

Sugar is also effective - if you can drink a cold sugar solution, you'll find the pain quickly subsides because the sugar helps block the receptors on your tongue that

are reacting with the capsaicin in the chilli. Cold milk is also good. Capsaicin bonds readily with the fat in milk and the casein in the milk has a detergent-like effect on the capsaicin and helps wash the heat away.

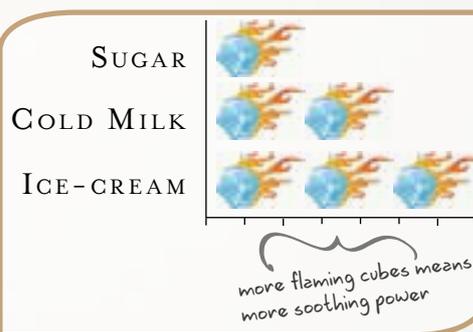
This leads to my favourite all-time chilli cure that all the kids will love: ice cream. Ice cream has all the things you need to cure your burning mouth. It is cool, sweet and milky.

This also explains the interesting effect you get when eating Spirit House **Dark Chocolate and Chilli Spice Cream**. At first, you taste nothing but chocolate but after ten seconds or so – after you've swallowed the ice cream – you get a small chilli tingle. The next mouthful puts out the chilli tingle and you taste chocolate ice cream again, followed seconds later by another chilli tingle.

## Soothing Power

While following a recipe for a Thai chilli sauce my nephew, Bodhi and I questioned the amount of hot chillies called for. We were aware that this sauce should be hot and while the individual chillies weren't that hot, there were certainly a heap in the recipe and we'd just pounded them into a fiery pulp.

So, we decided to arm ourselves with sugar, milk and ice-cream, take a small taste and test each of the remedies described in the article. The results are as follows:



# A Chef's Journey

## MEET the CHEFS

Katrina's son, Tristram (8), has spent most of his life watching Katrina get ready in the morning before heading off to the cooking school to teach a class. Katrina thinks he's starting to doubt her teaching abilities following a conversation over breakfast the other morning.

"Where are you going today Mummy?"

"I have to teach today at the cooking school".

"Again? You'd think they would have learned how to cook by now".

Just to reassure Tristram, and to allay any doubts you have about our chefs' teaching abilities, we thought it would be interesting to learn more about the journeys our chefs have followed before becoming masters of their craft.



**Annette Fear**

In 1995 Annette joined Spirit House as the first Restaurant Head Chef where she created a Thai inspired food style that led to three American Express Awards and put the Spirit House firmly on the map as a Thai food destination.

Before joining Spirit House, Annette started out studying nursing but found she had a flair for food while working at a friend's cafe. Working at a variety of restaurants, Annette eventually came to Noosa where she was head chef at Lindonis. She has also worked for many of Noosa's other top restaurants including Bistro C and Sails.

Annette had never formerly trained as a chef but had a passion for food. Combined with a sense of adventure, Annette has had a varied journey on the way to becoming one of Australia's top chefs specialising in Asian cuisine.

With over 25 years travelling across Asia and studying her first love, Thai cuisine, Annette's story really is a tale of finding something you love, then doing it professionally and with great passion.

Not hidebound by recipes, Annette encourages students to experiment with flavours and ingredients, to interpret and adapt recipes to their own tastes and that of their family.

Annette has a gift for creating recipes, for mixing and matching flavours, resulting in three internationally published Spirit House cook books.



**Katrina Ryan**

Katrina Ryan has taught at the Spirit House Cooking School since 2001. Her early mentors in Asian cuisine were Neil Perry and David Thompson. Katrina's first job as a 'real chef' was working for Neil Perry at his Bluewater Grill restaurant in North Bondi.

She graduated to become head chef at Neil's famous 'Rockpool' restaurant where she trained and inspired many young apprentices and chefs, including Kylie Kwong.

Just like Annette, Katrina's entree into cooking was out of passion and love of food. She started out studying to be a physio, but wasn't happy. When an opportunity came to work with Neil Perry, she jumped at it.

Her passion for food and understanding of how flavours interact enabled Katrina to put her stamp on a great food career.

At the cooking school, Katrina's approach to recipes is one of precision. She believes that a recipe should produce a predictable dish everytime you cook it and it's this precision that has earned her the respect and admiration of other chefs in our industry.

A driving force of the Slow Food movement here on the Sunshine Coast, Katrina is a passionate advocate of people connecting with the food they consume each day.



**Kelly Lord**

Kelly was Head Chef at the Spirit House restaurant from 2004 - 2008. Sick of commuting from Brisbane to Yandina five days a week, he threw in his tea towel and became a consulting chef, teaching several classes at Spirit House cooking school each week.

Kelly's Dad was a newspaper restaurant reviewer for many years and would take Kelly with him to sample the food.

At 16, it quickly occurred to Kelly and his Dad that his private school fees would probably be better invested in a good set of knives and a chef's apron.

Kelly has been cooking for nearly 22 years. Working in the kitchen's of some of Brisbane's most prestigious hotels, he became assistant head chef of the Stanford Hotel in Brisbane.

With vast technical knowledge and experience cooking for large groups through to fine dining, he has a vast repertoire of tips and tricks to tap into. Kelly has even cooked for the Queen!

Kelly has travelled the world and while most people head for the tourist icons, Kelly and his wife head for iconic restaurants.

From Heston Blumenthal's Fat Duck, Thomas Keller's French Laundry in the USA to David Thompson's Nahm restaurant in Bangkok and London - Kelly has their books, their autographs - and the hefty credit card bill.

In short, even after all these years, Kelly still lives, travels and breathes food.

# East Meets West

## Seafood Dipping Sauce

- 1 red eschalot, finely sliced
- 3 cloves peeled garlic
- 3 red or green bird's eye chillies
- 3 tablespoons fish sauce
- 3 tablespoons water
- 3 table spoons sugar
- Lime juice to taste.

In a blender, liquefy garlic, chillies fish sauce and water. Pour mixture into a small saucepan and add sugar and sliced eschalots. Bring to a gentle boil over med-low heat and simmer for 30 secs,

Remove pot form heat and add fresh lime juice to taste. Adjust sweetness and saltiness to taste.

Makes half a cup - use with store bought fish and chips, oysters, cooked prawns - any seafood!



## HANDY SAUCES

These two sauces are a great way to spice up any dish. The first dipping sauce is perfect with seafood. The black bean and pepper sauce comes from our Hot Plate book and, while not a dipping sauce, is a fantastic sauce for a variety of meat, fish and seafood.

## Black Bean and Pepper Sauce

1½ TEASPOONS WHOLE BLACK PEPPERCORN

4 CLOVES PEELED GARLIC

1 TBLSPN GINGER  
*peeled and roughly chopped*

2 TBLSPNS NEUTRAL VEGETABLE OIL  
*i.e., grape seed, sunflower, safflower*

3 GREEN SHALLOTS,  
*thinly slice the bottom half and shred green tops for garnish*

1 TBLSPN FERMENTED BLACK BEANS,  
*rinsed and drained*

3 TBLSPNS KECAP MANIS

1 TBLSPN THIN OR LIGHT SOY SAUCE

1½ TBLSPNS DARK PALM SUGAR

1 TBLSPN LIME JUICE

Crush the peppercorns in a mortar, add the garlic and ginger and pound to a paste.

Heat the oil in a saucepan to moderate heat and gently fry the paste and bottom half of the shallots for a minute or so. Add the black beans, kecap manis, soy sauce and palm sugar and bring to a simmer, cooking until the sugar has dissolved. Remove from heat and stir in lime juice.

Serve with BBQ prawns, steak, pork or use as a stir-fry sauce – this is a very versatile sauce.

## Nuns' Habits and Thai Desserts

If you were to take someone from Portugal to Thailand, they would probably thank you because there are Thai desserts they would instantly recognize. Desserts that might seem strange and unusual to you or I, because the main ingredient is egg yolk and sugar - the same ingredients which cause cholesterol and diabetes.

These desserts have weird names, Foy Thong (golden egg yolk shreds), Thong Yip (golden egg yolk flower tart) and Thong Yod (golden egg yolk drops).

The Thais didn't create these desserts on their own. They had help from Marie Guimar, the wife of Constantine Phaulkon, a foreign minister in the Ayutthaya court of King Narai back in 1680. But she didn't exactly hand over the recipe while enjoying dinner with the king. To cut a long story short, the natives revolted, her husband was assassinated, she hid with the French who then handed her over to the Siamese. (Sounds like a modern day Somali pirate saga!) The king promptly condemned her to perpetual slavery in the royal kitchens.

When he died, the new king appointed her head of the royal kitchen staff. Instead of taking revenge with arsenic cakes, Marie introduced desserts from Portugal - desserts that were baked, contained flour and especially egg yolks. Until then, Thais only ate eggs in savoury dishes.

Now why did the Portuguese use so many egg yolks? The answer is simply because in the 1600s, Portugal suffered an egg yolk glut. Portuguese monks used egg whites to clarify their wine while the nuns used egg whites to starch their habits. So, as you could imagine, there were plenty of yolks left to play with. As the Portuguese dominated world trade and controlled the sugar industry, it seemed only natural - to the Portuguese - to combine the two and make a dessert.

Foy Thong or 'golden threads' is a simple sweet treat that is made by whisking egg yolks and then drizzling the mix into a boiling sugar syrup. You can use the tines of a fork to drizzle the threads, although the Thais have created various kitchen gadgets to do this easily. The result is a sickly sweet egg thread with a doughy consistency.

## What's Taking So Long?

### BEHIND THE SCENES IN A RESTAURANT

Sometimes we receive complaints from guests about waiting over 30 minutes for their main course. We thought it would be helpful to describe what goes on behind the scenes in a restaurant on a busy shift.

Book a table for 10 guests at 1p.m. – no problem as long as the 10 guests show up at 1p.m. But arrive at 12.30 p.m with 12 people, (or 1.30 p.m. with 12 people) and it becomes a case of 'Houston, we have a problem'.

No big deal, you might say – simply add a table and two chairs. But what happens if the restaurant is totally booked and there are no spare tables or chairs? Many other guests are going to be inconvenienced while the waiters reshuffle all the tables trying to 'find' 1 extra table and 2 chairs.

Now a kitchen has a finite amount of stove and serving space. Which is why you book at a set time with most restaurants. In the case of Spirit House, we can seat and serve around 20-25 people every half hour. So the chefs are cooking about one meal every minute!

When our group of 12 arrive half an hour early (or late) they are going to dramatically slow the kitchen down. Which means meals are going to go out late to everyone. (Remember, there's only so much stove space to do the cooking).

Waiters explain to the group there will be delays in their food coming out. Usually this will have a ripple affect on all the other guests who arrived on time. The Floor Manager tries to prioritise those tables who show up on time, because it's not their fault the big group arrived early (or late) and with extra numbers. As a result, our big group has to wait for their meals and then they complain about it.

When tables are late, it affects the quality of service for all guests, for the rest of the sitting. So, next time you're in a restaurant and the food is taking a long time, it might not be the kitchen's fault. It just takes a few tables to arrive late, or early, and the whole flow of service will be interrupted for everyone. And the next day, our email inbox starts to ping !!!!

## BEST BOTTLE OPENER

About a year ago, Yuni, one of the assistants in the cooking school, brought in a very clever bottle opener.

You simply placed the opening over your beer or coke bottle, pushed down and it sprang back up removing the cap which was held to the opener by a magnet.

People at the cooking school loved this clever yet simple design. The problem was Yuni had bought hers in New Zealand years ago and it had no brand or name for us to track it down.

However, thanks to the internet, a video went viral with someone showing this opener in action and we were able to track down a supplier. We now have stock of these nifty bottle openers which you can buy for \$18 from the shop or online at [spirithouse.com.au/shop](http://spirithouse.com.au/shop).



## GINGER FIZZ

by Shelly Wright

Each year, the Spirit House owners offer a bonus trip to Thailand on our Tag-along Tours for staff members. This little cocktail number was inspired by floor staff supervisor, Shelly Wright, on her first trip to Thailand last year.

"Sitting at the cafe in Jim Thompson's House, a green oasis of solitude in the midst of Bangkok's mayhem and the heat of the afternoon, I become enamored with their lemongrass drinks. They gave me the lift I needed to survive the rest of the day in this, the most amazingly energetic city. Might have been the sugar hit, might have been the zing of the lemon grass ... maybe a bit of both.

Arriving home, I wanted to recreate this refreshing drink for the Spirit House beverage list. I thought it would be a great alternative to boring soft drinks and juices which seem to be all that's on offer for those who don't drink alcohol."

So after much trial and error behind the bar - add this, add that, taste this, taste that - Shelly's Ginger Fizz was created. The lemongrass syrup is made from the lemongrass off-cuts from the restaurant kitchen. It's the lemongrass syrup that's the key to this drink and we're often asked for this recipe alone. A refreshing drink to enjoy in the heat of the summer. Add a shot of vodka or gin if you want to jazz it up a bit - just add at muddling stage.



## GINGER FIZZ

**For the Syrup – makes 2 litres:**

8 ..... Stalks Lemongrass

2 cups ..... White Sugar

8 cups ..... water

### Lemongrass Syrup method:

Add all the syrup ingredients to a pot, bring to the boil then allow to simmer for an hour or so. Strain and store in a jar in the fridge.

### For the Ginger Fizz

3 Wedges ..... Lime

30 mls ..... Lemongrass syrup

4 Leaves ..... Mint shredded

Ginger Beer ... to top up glass

Sugar ..... to taste

### Ginger Fizz Method:

In a sturdy glass, muddle the lime wedges, add the mint and lemongrass syrup. Add some ice and top up with ginger beer. Stir in some sugar to taste or add a shot of vodka if you're so inclined.