

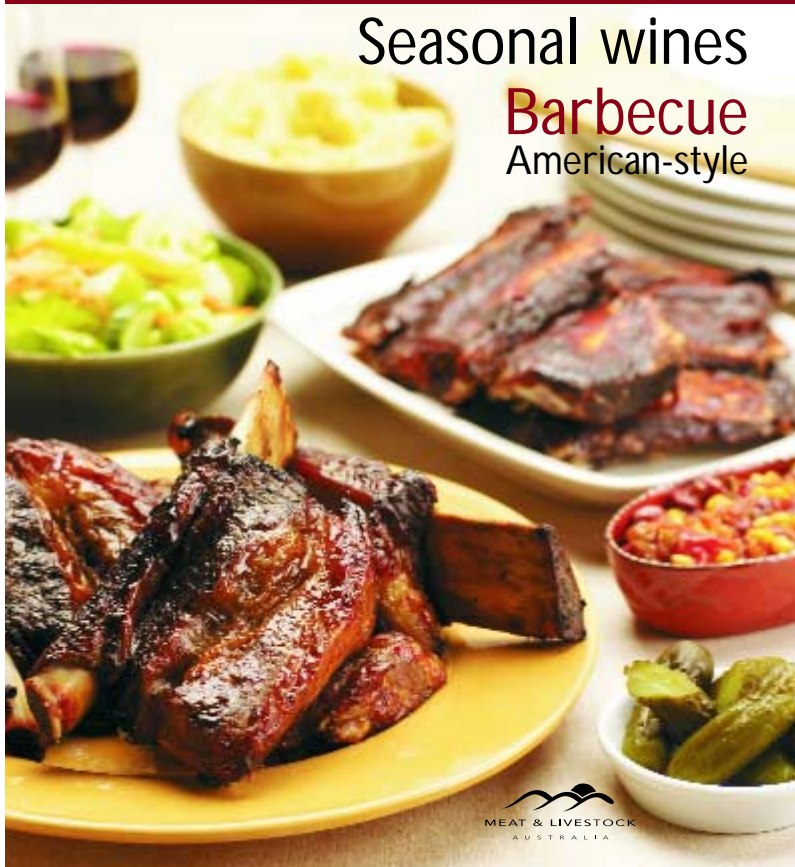
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chef' Special

issue 37 / august 2001

Seasonal wines

Barbecue
American-style




MEAT & LIVESTOCK
AUSTRALIA

f r o m t h e e d i t o r

chef's special

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Cover: Mustard-glazed BBQ ribs
with caramelised onions, mashed
potatoes and cornichons, dry spice-
rubbed BBQ ribs with corn salsa.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the latest edition of *Chef's Special*.

Winter is now well and truly upon us, and spring is just around the corner, so in this issue we're looking at wonderful fresh produce and perfect wine styles for late winter and early spring. We also look at American-style "low and slow" barbecue, complete with rubs, mops, sops and sauces, as well as Aussie campfire cooking.

We profile Melbourne chef John Psanis and his stylish No. 1 Fitzroy Street cafe, bar and restaurant. In terms of events, we look at the massive National Restaurant Association trade show in the US, and join Rita Erlich with the Melbourne-based chefs' forum Shared Tables on its first group visit to Sydney.

We'd love some feedback on the "Lamb & Dam" recipe we published in the previous issue. What did you think of it? Did you try it? Can you do better? Send us a photo of your dish, and the recipe you used (unless it was the one we published) and you'll go into the draw for a chance to win a \$500 book voucher.... And remember, we're only interested in recipes that have been thoroughly tested!



Culinary regards etc

We love our
Lamb

THE FLAVOUR
OF
AUSTRALIA



GAENG MUSSAMAN OF LAMB



PAN-SEARED LAMB
AND ARTICHOKE SALAD



ROAST LEG OF LAMB
WITH NATIVE MINT CONSOMME

PLANNING FOR A TIME OF PLENTY

'IF WINTER COMES, CAN SPRING BE FAR BEHIND?' ASKED THE ROMANTIC POET
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY. THE ANSWER, OF COURSE, IS NO.

In fact, much of the produce we traditionally associate with spring, such as new-season's lamb, actually hits the market in late winter. But at the same time as these "spring" products appear, we still have access to wonderful winter vegetables and cooking styles - and the weather to enjoy them.

Succulent new-season's lamb is eagerly awaited every year for its wonderful tenderness and delicate flavour. It's also often more competitively priced than at other times of the year.

Take advantage of trimmed cuts designed for quick-cook techniques, as well as flavoursome secondary cuts for braising. And don't forget lamb fancy meats like brains, sweetbreads, liver and kidneys.

The winter-spring cusp is a fabulous time of year for vegetables. The fine flavour of celeriac, the crunch and bite of fennel and the rich flavour of Jerusalem artichoke are all still at their best and most plentiful, along with greens like bok choy and broccoli. And just reaching their peak season are beetroot, spinach, snow peas and other warm weather vegetables.

This abundance presents the creative chef with myriad choices from soups, curries and casseroles to grills,

warm salads, stir-fries and stylish sandwiches.

Pulses are another ingredient perfectly suited to this time of year, warming, earthy and versatile.

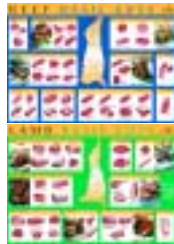
And while you're making the most of the season's lamb, don't neglect other lamb-loving ingredients like sweet potatoes, cumquats, scallions/spring onions, rocket, basil, polenta, rosemary, olives and garlic.

Lamb has been a staple of so many of the world's cuisines that there are few countries that have not produced their own distinctive lamb dishes. So wherever in the world you want to take your diners, you can do it with lamb. From a classic boulangere to an Afghani *aus* (a dish of noodles, pulses, spinach, ground lamb and yoghurt sauce), a Greek *kreatopita* (lamb and cheese pie) to a fragrant rogan josh, a warm salad topped with sliced lamb backstrap and roasted beetroot to a spicy and sumptuous Malaysian-inspired *perchick* roast leg... the possibilities are endless.

So why wait until spring? The glorious new season's lamb will be here very soon, ready to savour with complementary and seasonal flavours.

YES Please send me a free set of Lamb and Beef Cuts Charts
Return this coupon by mail to Chef's Special Cuts Charts Offer,
PO Box 1514, Crows Nest 2065 or by fax (02) 9875 5504

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Longrain has a few new approaches

SHARING TABLES By Rita Erlich

The result? Most appetising. Well-balanced, harmonious, full of interesting flavours. In fact, most people want a second helping. More Sydney please. And perhaps Sydney chefs could come to Melbourne?

The chefs were all members of Shared Tables, the group that MLA's food service division formed with Kinetic Energy (formerly the Gas and Fuel Corporation of Victoria). They had been to similar lunches that had been organised by the Restaurant and Catering Association of Victoria, but felt the format wasn't right.

So they created one that was, five years later, it's big and bold enough to go on a Sydney tour, supported by Carlton and United for beer and Hill International for wine. It started early Sunday morning, and by the time everyone arrived in Sydney it was lunch.

First stop: Otto, on the Wharf at Woolloomooloo. Bright blue sky and water, warm sunlight streaming through the windows.

A familiar face to greet everyone: Maurice Terzini, who re-focused Melbourne's approach to Italian eating at Caffè e Cucina and then at The Melbourne Wine Room. Otto is big, chic, unfussy, every detail designed. It is the place to be seen these days. Every detail and every diner is observed by Maurice. There's a special menu, which includes White Rocks veal from Western Australia thanks to a family connection (the chef's godfather produces it). Highlights: Chef Nino Joseph Zocali's version of vitello tonnato – this one with layers of seared tuna and poached veal, surrounded by a rich Italian mayonnaise. And there is a fabulous dish of slow-roasted rack of veal with roasted beetroot and porcini sauce.

Olympia Bortolotto and the chef go into a huddle: 'Flavour, balance and quality product,' says Nino. 'You should always be able to taste the ingredients,' agrees Olympia.

Lunch finished in time for dinner at Aria, a kind of companion to Otto in that it's the place to be seen. The location is fabulous: the main dining room overlooking the Opera House and Sydney Harbour. Warm rich wood, extraordinary rugs as big as carpets on the floor. The mood is understated and opulent.

The chefs are interested in the demi-tasse of lobster and fennel broth, topped with a sweet fennel crisp, and in the 2000 Ferngrove Riesling from Frankland Valley that goes with it. Eric Frahamer, Stephen Mercer and Rod Barbey go into a huddle over the wines, as they will do again during the trip.

'There's a bigger market for upmarket restaurants in Sydney than there is in Melbourne,' says Stephen.

Beef comes as a classic dish: filet mignon Rossini, with a potato galette and Bordelaise sauce, accompanied by a choice of classics – Crown Lager and Browns of Padthaway Family Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 1999, a wine with the depth and structure to match the beef. The highlight of the night, however, is the assiette of Aria desserts, served with Leffe beer. Actually there are four square plates set on a large square plate. Teague Ezard observes the plates (Bernardaud French porcelain) and admires the desserts with a particular smile, because the second pastry chef is moving to his restaurant at Adelphi. We hope to see a chocolate savarin, and gingered pear with licorice icecream in Melbourne.

Monday morning. An early start to see the Sydney fish market in operation. Those who make the early start understand clearly why Sydney has the edge over Melbourne in matters of seafood. Lunch at Longrain, in Surry Hills, the restaurant that was awarded the Best New and Best Thai in The Sydney Morning Herald Good Food Guide. The décor is simple and expensive, the tables are large and always to be shared by diners. Perfect for this group.



Otto, on the Wharf at Woolloomooloo

THE RECIPE SOUNDS CHALLENGING. TAKE 20 MELBOURNE CHEFS, STIR THEM UP WELL, AND POUR INTO SYDNEY RESTAURANTS.

Sydney does Thai restaurants in the way Melbourne does Chinese restaurants. Chef Martin Boetz gives one explanation of why Thai food is so good in Sydney. It's a story about the power of one, how individuals can make a difference in an entire city. In Melbourne, there are two people – Gilbert Lau (Flower Drum) and Elizabeth Chong, who has just marked 40 years as a teacher and ambassador for Chinese food. In Sydney, the defining figure for Thai food was a Danish chef called Mogens Bay Esbensen, whose skills and influence were major. David Thomson (Darley Street Thai) worked with him; Martin Boetz worked with David.

Longrain is a showcase for MLA, as it turns out. Everyone expects Sydney oysters to be good, but here are a few new approaches, such as a kind of lacy omelette over minced veal, prawns, and bean sprouts. There's a hot and sour salad of Angus beef, and a peanut curry of braised goat with Thai basil and chilli. We have a huge range of beers to choose from (Cascade and Stella Artois are the favourites), and the 2000 Te Kairanga Sauvignon Blanc is perfect with a crisp-skinned salt and pepper whole baby snapper.

The chefs are talking a lot now among themselves, watching details, asking questions of their hosts and one another. It is very clear that one enormous benefit of the trip is that it gives them time to think about their own establishments in the context of Australian restaurants, and it provides them with an opportunity to exchange ideas.

Dinner that night is at the Pavilion on the Park, in the gardens near the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Another beautiful building, handsomely set up. Chef Chris Millar is known to many, because he had been chef at the Hotel Windsor, a position Tom Milligan has just taken up. He is in a perfect position to help define the differences between the two cities' approaches to restaurants.

"If you want full throttle, happening-now glamour, Sydney does it extremely well," he says. "Melbourne restaurants are more personal you see the owners and the chefs much more."

His dishes include a great galantine with rabbit, squab and figs, and lamb with baby beetroot and artichoke.

The final meal, lunch at Watermark, is a highlight for almost everyone. Not only the location – overlooking the water at Balmoral Beach – but also the attention to detail, the attentiveness of the waiters, the wine list, and the food.

This is where there is most discussion with the owner (Mark Wilson) and chef Kenneth Leung. This is the longest running restaurant the group has visited, which puts it in line with Melbourne expectations of a restaurant's life. Tony Rogasky, who has been in the industry for 35 years, had been startled to be told over one dinner that a restaurant's life was only three years.

"We don't change the menu seasonally we upgrade the dishes," Mark Wilson explains. "What works, works. We've stopped trying to change the menu."

Most of the group buy a copy of Fusion, the Watermark Restaurant Cookbook, which was first published in 1997.

That was the final meal on the tour. Does a group of chefs ever tire of eating? Not a bit: a party of them had organised to go to Tetsuya's for dinner on their final night.

At the end of it all, the tour achieved what Shared Tables has always been about. The events give chefs what they want – a good speaker, new ideas for cooking and food presentation, and the chance to network. For MLA, and the wine and beer companies, the events are about marketing products with the best kind of soft sell. For the chefs, MLA, Carlton and United, and Hill International are associated with stimulating company, forward thinking, innovation, bright ideas and friendship. It's a pretty good mix.

U.S.-STYLE BARBECUE: LOW & SLOW

AS WITH THE FAMOUS QUOTATION ABOUT ENGLAND AND AMERICA, AUSTRALIA AND THE US ARE COUNTRIES "DIVIDED BY A COMMON LANGUAGE" - AND NEVER MORE SO THAN WHEN THE SUBJECT IS FOOD AND COOKING.

The fast, dry-heat cooking method we think of as barbecuing or char-grilling is known simply as grilling in the US (and what we call grilling they call broiling...). In most parts of North America, and especially in the Southern States of the US, barbecue is a slow, low-temperature cooking method using indirect heat, which can take several hours to cook large pieces of meat.

The word "barbecue" is probably derived from a West Indian term, barbacoa, meaning to cook meat over hot coals. Traditionally, the meat was smoke-cooked in large "pits" using smouldering logs or charcoal; the same word is still used in some States today, although most people now use a kettle barbecue or hooded smoker to prepare authentic barbecue. The charcoal and wood chips are placed at the side of the barbecue so the food cooks indirectly. A pan of water is added to help maintain a constant temperature and prevent drying.

Before the Civil War, when barbecues first became popular in the South, pork was the patriotic meat of choice, but in modern times a range of meats are popular. Beef ribs and brisket are enjoyed widely while some barbecue aficionados prefer the baron of beef (double striploin and rump), whole cabrito (capretto or kid goat), or even a slow-roasted crown roast of lamb.

While the US "barbecue belt" covers the States of Louisiana, Missouri, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina, the barbecue method is now practised throughout the US and Canada, so regional variations abound. In Kentucky, mutton is often barbecued, while in Texas the beef is smoke-cooked using the fragrant timber mesquite. Sauces, rubs and marinades are all affected by regionality.

The constants are that the meat is cooked for a long period - 4-5 hours for beef ribs, and anywhere from 5 hours to more than



Mustard-glazed BBQ ribs with caramelised onions, mashed potatoes and cornichons.

20 hours for brisket - at extremely low temperatures. The basic temperature range for barbecue is 175°F-225°F, or about 84°C-108°C. Barbecue experts recommend using two thermometers - one on the cooking equipment, to measure the cooking temperature, plus a meat thermometer to help judge when the meat is done. The only colour should be a ring of pinkness inside the meat - this is caused by the slow-smoking process.

Marinades:

Generally, the leaner the food, the more oil is needed in the marinade. Brisket, which contains layers of fat, requires little oil, and acid-based marinades are sometimes recommended for this reason, and for their tenderising influence. Another favourite is to pack the brisket in brown sugar and refrigerate it overnight.

Marinating for 4-7 hours is recommended for most cuts, although some experts believe brisket should be marinated for 24 hours!

Rubs:

Many aficionados believe rubs, or dry marinades, are more effective than liquid marinades, because they form a tasty crust on the surface of the meat and provide more concentrated flavour when used on large cuts such as brisket.

Salt and sugar are the most common ingredients, but need to be used in limited quantities, as too much salt will draw moisture out of the meat, while too much sugar will burn. Other popular ingredients include garlic powder, chilli, onion powder, lemon pepper, dry mustard, cumin, sage, thyme, allspice, cinnamon, nutmeg and ginger.

The rub is applied - either by rubbing or sprinkling - and the meat is then refrigerated overnight. Again, it is important to



choose flavours that work well with your baste and table sauce. Regional differences are clear: a Carolina rub might feature salt, sugar, brown sugar, cumin, chilli powder, pepper, cayenne and paprika; a Kansas City rub for ribs also includes garlic powder and onion powder, but is lighter on the sugar; a Memphis-style rub has paprika, cayenne and pepper but no chilli, and also includes onion powder; and a rub from the Texas Panhandle has cumin, fresh coriander, tomato paste, fresh garlic, oil and red pepper flakes, making it more of a paste or wet rub. Wet rubs are also common in the Southwest, and in Kansas City and are recommended for leaner cuts, which are more likely to lose moisture.

Walter Jetton - barbecue chef to President Johnson, among others - used a dry rub of salt, sugar, black pepper, MSG, dry lemon powder and paprika.

Mops & Sops:

The long, slow cooking process means that even with a marinade or rub, meat can dry out. The purpose of the mop, or basting sauce, is to keep the meat moist and to add extra flavour.

Mops are usually quite thin and pourable. They can be as simple as beer, wine, stock or fruit juice, or complex creations with many ingredients. Generally, a mop will be slightly acid for cuts with plenty of fat, while cuts which dry out easily will probably include oil.

Mops are usually cooked before use, to blend and concentrate the flavours, and should also be used hot and kept simmering while the meat cooks. This stops the mop from lowering the (already-low) temperature of the food; protects against any bacteria picked up from the meat; and gives a more intense flavour.

Mops are often applied with a clean cotton dishmop, hence their name. When cooking for large groups, the legendary Walter Jetton used a cotton floor mop!

If you have used a rub, don't begin to mop until about half-way through the cooking time - this gives the rub time to form a crust, so it isn't removed by the mop. Smaller cuts should then be mopped every 30 minutes, and large cuts every 45 minutes.

Barbecue Sauces:

Once the meat is cooked, it is served with a variety of accompaniments, varying from region to region, and of course, with barbecue sauce. Sauces are controversial in the barbecue scene - some say they define barbecue, while others maintain that if the food needs a sauce, it doesn't deserve to be called barbecue!

Historically the first barbecue sauce (from the late 1700s) was simply vinegar. Later, water, sugar and peppers were added - this "tidewater" style is still popular in eastern Carolina. Moving west, tomatoes and other spices were added, and once you reach Tennessee and Kentucky, the sauces become sweeter and contain much less vinegar, while in Texas chillies are an important ingredient.

So a Central Southern Carolina sauce may be a thin sauce of vinegar and mustard; Western North Carolina offers a thin tomato-based sauce with ketchup, vinegar and sugar; a Memphis-style sauce is sweet and tomatoey; Kentucky enjoys a black sauce of Worcestershire sauce and vinegar; and Kansas City sauces are thick and tomato-based with sweetness and spice. Alabama even has a white barbecue sauce, based on mayonnaise and flavoured with vinegar, lemon juice, pepper and cayenne!

LARGE COMPANIES - AND ESPECIALLY LARGE PASTORAL COMPANIES - HAVE AN IMAGE PROBLEM.THEY'RE SEEN AS CONSERVATIVE, MONOLITHIC AND ISOLATED FROM THE LATEST ADVANCES.

Of course, these perceptions are not always accurate. Stanbroke Pastoral Company, the world's largest cattle company, is certainly on the move. Using technology, the latest breeding and handling techniques, and placing a strong emphasis on education and training have helped keep the company in the forefront of the beef industry.

It's not all moving and shaking, however, because continuity is also valued. The long-term effect of Stanbroke's policy of assisting employees in paying for their children's education has seen many second-generation employees, and a third generation is not far away.

Stanbroke was formed 36 years ago by AMP (which owned 51%), Thomas Borthwick & Son, Squatting Investments and the Kidman Group. AMP's then-chairman, Sir Vincent Fairfax, and Victorian board member Sir James Balderstone felt strongly

that the company should be investing in rural Australia. Sir James went on to become Stanbroke's first managing director.

While it began as a straight cattle producer, Stanbroke has moved to vertically integrate its business over the past few years, in an effort to control the product from paddock to plate. This has seen it move into feedlots, take over an abattoir, and now market its product, including the branded Diamantina Beef for foodservice.

In a recent media interview, current managing director John Cox put it this way: "We breed it, we grow it, we brand it, we fatten it and we have identification of that animal right through to the box." Diamantina Beef, launched in 1999, is sold in 11 countries and has a growing presence within Australia.

The rural landscape has changed in recent years, and this has seen Stanbroke change the way it does things, from training its staff to handling cattle. Some examples are:

*Training: the declining population of many rural areas means more and more employees join the company with little or no experience of rural life. Two-week induction courses have been introduced, to teach basic country skills. Staff are also trained





in cattle handling, nutrition, pasture management, selecting cattle for markets and computer skills. Staff are also encouraged to complete nationally-recognised qualifications and on-the-job training.

* Genetics: genetic science is now a major factor in beef production, and Stanbroke is no exception. Its Brahman bloodlines have crossed with major studs here and in the US, and, except in tropical areas, Charolais and Santa Gertrudis have been infused. It has reactivated its Santa Gertrudis bull breeding programme, and claims Australian Santa Gertrudis is now superior to that being produced in the US (where the breed was developed). Composite and cross-breeding has been introduced in response to market demand, typically using Angus and Charolais. Bulloo Downs is now being run as a specialist cross-breeding station, using Shorthorn and Angus bulls and first-cross Santa Gertrudis-Brahman cows.

* Handling: the company has introduced an official policy which has seen it abandon the use of whips, rattles or even shouting to move cattle through the yards. The loud noises moved cattle effectively but also increased their stress levels, and this in turn can affect the quality - especially the pH - of the meat produced. These days, Stanbroke sees itself as a food company so there's more emphasis on the end product.

* Environment: greenies and graziers have had significant differences in the past, but Stanbroke says it is committed to managing its properties sustainably. Some 98% of its 12.6 million hectares remains in a natural state. And while the company was (notoriously) granted permits to clear 8,822 hectares last year, none of the permits has been used. An environmental audit of its properties is about to begin, assessing flora, fauna, biodiversity, salinity and ground water.

Stanbroke Pastoral Company is Australia's - and the world's - largest and most successful cattle company.

Its 29 stations (in Queensland and the Northern Territory) cover 12.6 million hectares of land. They include Ardmore, Barkly Downs, Carpentaria Downs, Donors Hill, Fort Constantine, Islay Plains, Kamilaroi, Lyndhurst, Rocklands, Strathmore and Weetalaba (Old), as well as Alroy Downs, Banka Banka and Lake Nash (NT).

Cattle numbers have risen from 190,000 in 1970 to 530,000, and the company branded more than 136,000 calves. Around 20% of cattle are for the live trade to Asia.

Last year, the company had a net worth of \$357 million, with a turnover of \$166 million. It has 320 permanent staff.

e v e n t s

The US National Restaurant Association (NRA) Show is like nothing else, and Lachlan Bowtell, National Operations Manager for Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), told *Chef's Special* that after seeing it, he did not doubt that it was "the biggest food show in the world". The event, held at Chicago's McCormick Place from May 19-22, is a must-visit occasion for the US industry, and increasingly for operators from overseas.

Exhibitors ranged from food suppliers to air conditioning manufacturers and financial services companies. There were also information sessions on each of the four days, covering topics as diverse as staff training and retention, customer service, healthy menu items, franchising, biotechnology and marketing. A series of technology seminars looks at point-of-sale technology, online sales, food safety issues and automation.

Mr Bowtell noted that the emphasis on food safety - through sessions with names like "HACCP Automation: Guaranteeing the Safety of your Food" - was aimed largely at medium-to-high volume operators. Basic guidelines on temperature control and cross-contamination - areas Australia has been

focussing on for at least a decade - were prominent.

The South Hall featured an area known as the Chef's Stage, where celebrity and non-celebrity chefs demonstrated their expertise. Dishes featured included regional specialties from Louisiana, Tennessee, New Orleans - even Alaska, as well as regional food from Europe and Asia.

Specialised pavilions at the show included the technology pavilion, the Hotel Collection and the American Food Fair, which was supported by National and State-based departments of agriculture.

Each of the four days also had its own theme, with special events to suit. Saturday May 19 was Careers & Education Day. Sunday May 20, was Government Affairs & State Relations Day. Monday May 21 was Community Involvement Day and Tuesday May 22 was Power of Partnership Day. There were also the usual events associated with a major foodservice show, such as ice-carving and special food functions like "A Taste of Chicago".

Among the trends Mr Bowtell picked up on during his visit were:

THEY CAME, THEY SAW,

FOUR DAYS, MORE THAN 2,000 EXHIBITORS, INFORMATION SESSIONS, DEMONSTRATIONS, AND SOMETHING LIKE 85,000-90,000 VISITORS.



Some of the exhibitors at the National Restaurant Association (NRA) Show

- Red meat retains its dominance, accounting for 40-45% of menus, with a great diversity of beef cuts apparent. Many of these were designed for traditional American slow barbecue. "Chefs in the US are used to using secondary beef cuts in a way that we are not," he commented.
- Branded beef is becoming hugely important to the US foodservice market. The US Certified Angus brand has 15,000 licensed outlets, but there are 35 different Angus brands, and this has led the Angus breed to dominate beef production. (American Certified Angus beef is from larger and more heavily marbled animals than the Certified Australian Angus Beef brand).
- Lamb appears on only about 10% of menus, and there's never more than one dish. American-produced lamb comes from older, larger animals than its Australian equivalent, because the category is based on ossification, not dentition. However, despite the tariff situation, Australian lamb continues to make great inroads in the US foodservice industry, due to its quality, tenderness and range of cuts.
- The range of flavours available in prepared foods in the US remains limited. The prevailing blandness is lifted only by very sweet or very hot flavours. Sweet products seem to be on the increase - in line with the growing popularity of American barbecue, mops and sauces based on molasses and brown sugar were everywhere. In the prepared appetiser market, Hispanic-style flavours are on the rise.
- Regional differences abound, and the East and West Coasts are very different, said Mr Bowtell. New York is a stable, traditional market with a strong French influence, and features a lot of red meat; the Midwest continues the strong red meat focus, but tends to present it in more homestyle offerings; while much of the West Coast's food scene is "utter and total confusion", Mr Bowtell said. Red meat was less popular on the West Coast, and menu development seemed strongly driven by fashions and fads.

THEY TASTED...



Entrance to the National Restaurant Association (NRA) Show

THE POWER OF [NUMBER] ONE...



Executive Chef Tony Pearce

Number

NUMBER ONE FITZROY STREET MUST BE ONE OF MELBOURNE'S MOST SPECTACULAR RESTAURANTS, WITH 280° VIEWS OF THE ST KILDA FORESHORE AND CITY SKYLINE, AND SITUATED AT THE END OF THE BUSTLING, COSMOPOLITAN FITZROY STREET PRECINCT.



Lamb fillet served rare on sesame salad with szechwan vinaigrette.



One Fitzroy Street continues to attract big crowds with its combination of location, atmosphere and simple but classy fare.

The establishment offers a wine bar and bistro/café downstairs, which seats up to 150 (including outdoor seating), plus a landmark 'casual fine dining' restaurant upstairs, which seats up to 200 (including the balcony).

Now in its 6th year, Number One Fitzroy Street continues to attract big crowds with its combination of location, atmosphere and Executive Chef John (aka Yanni) Psanis' simple but classy fare. Mr Psanis, who co-owns the eatery with Christopher Lucas, says 6 years' experience means the floor staff - "a pretty good team" - are now accomplished performers.

He says the style of food - loosely termed Modern Australian - is an attempt to combine the influences of his Greek parentage, 4 years at Brown's cooking French cuisine, and a stint at the Oriental Hotel in Bangkok. The result is eclectic, full of fresh flavours and quality produce, and never pretentious.

Popular offerings on the June 2001 restaurant menu include entrees of Char-grilled calves' liver on seeded mustard mash, with port-caramelised onions and prosciutto; and a Veal & pork sausage on Middle Eastern pizza bread with hummus and lemon-mint tabbouleh.

Mains include a Kid goat rogan josh on fragrant jasmine rice with cucumber & chilli salad, using 6-8 week-old kid, which Mr Psanis says "absolutely walks out the door". Milk-fed veal shank braised Milanese-style on olive tapenade mash and MSA-graded Beef sirloin, char-grilled and served on a wild mushroom pearl barley risotto.

There's also an award-winning wine list, with a huge variety of Australian wines - including some emerging wine areas - as well as imported labels.

Downstairs, says Mr Psanis, is "basically a cheaper version of upstairs - simple, good food and heaps of variety. There are usually 27 or 28 items on the downstairs menu, from nibbles for the wine bar patrons to substantial meals".

Crowd-pleasers like nachos, dips and flatbread, pizza and risotto are well-represented, along with stir-fries, salads, soups and grills. Highlights include Corned beef on mash with a seeded mustard jus, cabbage and bacon; Char-grilled beef eye fillet with saffron mash and port wine jus; and a Beef stir-fry with Chinese oyster and chilli-plum sauce and udon noodles.

The downstairs wine bar list includes a huge selection of Australian wines, all available either by the glass or by the bottle. Floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors - plus a log fire in cold weather - are added attractions.

Mr Psanis says that while much of the upstairs clientele is corporate, including many regulars, downstairs attracts "an incredible amount of walk-in trade" from Fitzroy St, whether locals or tourists. Families are big on weekends, while older couples often drop in for dinner downstairs early in the week. The restaurant also stages functions, including weddings and corporate events.

He says the location has been a big part of the establishment's success "it makes people feel like they're not in Melbourne, especially in summer - it clears the head". Essentially, the restaurant is close enough to the CBD to be convenient, but far enough to supply wonderful views and a feeling of distance.

All this, of course, would be nothing without the mouth-watering fare on offer.

"I go on the freshness of the food. You should be able to taste every ingredient in the dish, without too much infusion of flavours," Mr Psanis said. "It's simple flavours - really honest, good flavours. That's what I aim for."



SAVOUR

the season

Merlot 1999, a soft, fruity and very affordable red which could even be lightly chilled once the weather warms. Seppelt Terrain Series Cabernet Sauvignon 1998, top value to drink now, and the Rosemount Shiraz Cabernet 1999 or 2000, great with Mediterranean flavours. For those prepared to spend more, the wonderful Lindemans St George Cabernet Sauvignon 1996 is an ideal match, and Penfolds Bin 407 Cabernet Sauvignon 1997 is also a winner.

Hearty winter dishes will be enhanced by the stylish Coldstream Hills Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 1997, the satisfying Lindemans Limestone Coast Shiraz Cabernet (especially the 1996 vintage), or the spicy Penfolds Old Vine Shiraz Grenache Mourvedre 1997. At a lower price point, try Edwards & Chaffey E & C Cabernet Sauvignon 1998 or Rosemount Hill of Gold Cabernet Sauvignon 1998.

Warmer weather will see grills and salads take centre stage. Lindemans Bin 99 Pinot Noir 1996 and Wynns Shiraz 1998 are good value choices. At higher price points, try Penfolds Bin 128 Coonawarra Shiraz 1997, Seppelt Chalambar Shiraz 1998 or Rosemount Mountain Blue Shiraz Cabernet 1997.

While the Australian wine market has skewed towards red in recent years - and will continue to do so, due to the influence of increased plantings of red wine grapes - white wines remain popular, although the old rules about red and white wines mean they are paired with red meats less often than they might be.

Food-friendly offerings include Lindemans Padthaway Chardonnay 1999 and Seppelt Mornington Peninsula Pinot Gris 1998 - a great salad wine. At slightly higher prices, try Penfolds Eden Valley Reserve Riesling 1999, Rosemount Show Reserve Chardonnay 1998, Seppelt Drumborg Riesling 1998 or Seppelt Drumborg Sauvignon Blanc 1999.

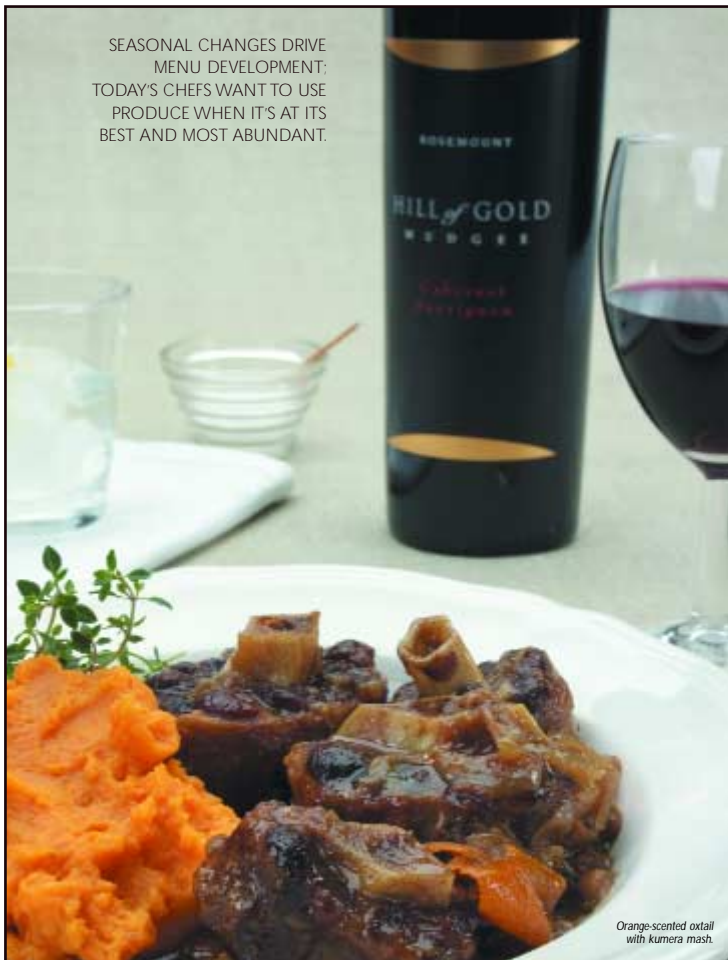
Awareness of seasonality has increased markedly when it comes to food, but what about wine? The wines we choose to accompany a meal will change during the year for climatic reasons - who wants to drink a heavyweight red with lunch in the middle of summer? - but wine should also complement the meal it is enjoyed with. As different ingredients reach their peak, perhaps we should be looking for wines that match them best.

Right now, the weather is still cold enough for robust, slow-cooked meat dishes and substantial roasts to attract diners; by early September, grills and lighter offerings may be tops. We've gone looking for wines that complement both the ingredients and the food styles likely to star over the next few weeks.

Below, you'll find some seasonal suggestions from the Southcorp stable of brands, including such respected labels as Penfolds, Lindemans, Seppelt, Coldstream Hills, Edwards & Chaffey, Wynns and, more recently Rosemount Estate (through a merger earlier this year). We have endeavoured to include a range of different styles and price brackets.

Perfect partners for lamb include Lindemans Cawarra

SEASONAL CHANGES DRIVE MENU DEVELOPMENT; TODAY'S CHEFS WANT TO USE PRODUCE WHEN IT'S AT ITS BEST AND MOST ABUNDANT.



Orange-scented oxtail with kumera mash.



Hilton Executive Chef Kurt Looser

TROLLEY triumphant

It's easy to dismiss something as old-fashioned, just because it's been around for a while. But some things never go out of style - like top quality beef, cooked to perfection and served simply. The trolley carvery at the Sydney Hilton's San Francisco Grill is a perfect example. "Old-fashioned" flavours and ideas have a habit of coming back into vogue - this one never went away - and some could offer great potential for your business.

Hilton Executive Chef Kurt Looser says the trolley has been a feature of the San Francisco Grill since the hotel opened in the mid-1970s, and it still does a roaring trade, especially with male diners.

"I'd say about 80% of the beef trolley would be served to men, and some men just like a nice, big juicy piece of beef," he said. "I think it's that simple."

Of course, the beef must always be of the finest quality, Mr Looser added. The hotel is currently buying Certified Australian Angus Beef (MSA) for the trolley carvery. The chosen cut is the O.P. rib - what Americans call the prime rib - which Mr Looser describes as being like a cube roll on the bone. Each O.P. rib has 7-8 bones, and each slice served has a bone attached.

"And I think we cook it to perfection!" Mr Looser exclaimed. The beef is served medium rare, he said, and most people were happy with this, although it can be cooked further on request.

'Beef from the trolley' is offered with a selection of classic accompaniments - red wine jus, mustard and horseradish.