

 Seasonal cook


Photo: Domino Postiglione

# Easy does it

The most pleasurable dishes are often the simplest, writes STEVE MANFREDI.

**A**sked about refinement in relation to the food at Berowra Waters Inn, legendary restaurateur Gay Bilson once said, "I just want to serve people a good meal. I am against hosts of flavours together on the plate. If a dish is something, it should only be that and not lots of extraneous flavours."

If a dish is something, it should only be that. Have a look at the food photos from some of our top restaurants. Pretty? Of course. Photogenic? Exceedingly. But, rather than dishes in the strict sense, these are mostly constructions of elements that are clever, surprising and more art than food.

They are by necessity small and intricate and live in a lilliputian world populated by tiny vegetables, micro herbs and really-difficult-to-procure or finicky ingredients, such as fennel pollen and rosemary flowers.

There's no doubt many people enjoy eating multiple courses of tiny-portioned plates but there are also those who go expecting "a good meal" and instead experience a series of intellectual exercises.

I find myself agreeing with Gay Bilson. I just want to serve people a good meal. [smanfredi@smh.com.au](mailto:smanfredi@smh.com.au)  
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## BARBECUED SPATCHCOCK WITH WINTER HERBS AND RADICCHIO

If spatchcock is not available, a small chicken cut in half lengthways can be prepared using the same method.

**4 spatchcocks, 400g-500g each**  
**6 tbs extra virgin olive oil**  
**Salt and pepper**  
**1 cup mixed winter herbs (sage, rosemary, parsley, chives), leaves picked from stems**  
**1 head treviso lettuce or radicchio**  
**4 lemons**

Take spatchcocks, one at a time, and place on surface with cavity of bird facing you so legs are facing away. Backbone is underneath, running from the "parson's nose" to the neck. Using a sharp pair of kitchen scissors, start at the cavity end, cut 1cm to the right of the backbone along the length of the bird. Then cut 1cm to the left, all the way along, removing backbone and neck. Wash birds, removing any small pieces of bone, and pat dry. Flatten spatchcock. Rub birds with 2 tbs of olive oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Place on hot barbecue or grill and cook 8-10 minutes each side. Chop all herbs together and mix with remaining 4 tbs of oil. Clean and trim treviso. Slice top to bottom in thin strips. Cut each lemon into two cheeks. Once cooked, place each bird on serving plates. Serve with treviso and lemon cheeks. Spoon a little herb dressing on top.

**Serves 4 as main course (pictured)**  
**Wine** Vin jaune from the French Jura or a medium-bodied chardonnay.

## BRUTTI MA BUONI

Literally translated, these biscuits are "ugly but delicious".

**5 egg whites from large eggs**  
**330g castor sugar**  
**400g blanched almonds, lightly roasted and chopped**  
**Pinch cinnamon**  
**Unsalted butter and plain flour for dusting baking dish**

Preheat oven to 160C. Beat egg whites in mixer with a whisk attachment until foamy. Keep whisking and slowly add sugar until all incorporated to form stiff, shiny peaks. Gently fold in chopped almonds and cinnamon. Butter and flour a baking sheet. Spoon mixture on in 1 tbs dollops, continuing at 2cm spacing until all used. Bake for 30 minutes, remove, turn oven to 130C. Wait until temperature drops then bake for 10-12 minutes. Remove and cool before serving. Keeps for weeks in an airtight container.

**Makes 35-40**

**Drink** with espresso, macchiato or latte.

 Full bottle

## TRYING PRESSING MATTERS RO 2011 \$29

Pressing Matters makes several gorgeous rieslings that all have the letter R on the label, which stands for residual sugar. This RO has zlich, so it's very dry. The R9 has nine grams of residual sugar but more texture. Others are in the sweetish categories at R69 and R139. RO has plenty of citrus tang and bracing, snappy yet chalky acidity that will mellow. There's also a citrus blossom fragrance, spice and lime juice, with freshness on the palate and a long finish. The austere style is a great aperitif. Even better with fried shrimp and aioli.



## CELLARING GEMSBROOK HILL PINOT NOIR 2010 \$54

Pinot noir and duck is a no-brainer, and squab works equally well. If that intensity is too much, try quail with a pinot noir that's on the lighter side, such as this one from Gembrook Hill. I love the purity and fineness of this pinot. It's quite mouth-watering, moreish and savoury, with a hint of spice. Earthy sous-bois adds depth to the tangy fresh strawberry and raspberry fruit characters. It's really poised, with silky tannins and juicy acidity before a persistent, long finish. Drink now and cellar for five or more years.



## CELEBRATING ESTE VINTAGE CUVÉE 2006 \$40

This is one very special Aussie sparkling from De Bortoli in the Yarra Valley. The blend of pinot noir and chardonnay has fruit sourced from the lovely Lusatia Park vineyard in Woorti Yallock. It's golden-hued, bright and fresh, with plenty of fine bead, but it's still light, with lovely acidity. There's richness, too, among the complex toasty, smoky, honeyed nougat and marzipan notes, with stone fruit and citrus. It finishes dry. So sophisticated, you would swear it should be more expensive.

**Jane Faulkner**

