

 Seasonal cook


Photo: Marina Oshibant

Scent messages

The penetrating perfume of the quince is irresistible,
writes STEVE MANFREDI.

Quinces always take me by surprise. It's not that I don't notice the early batches in the shops. They tend to arrive while the weather is still pleasantly warm and, as they sit next to the late peaches, I don't pay them any attention, or if I do it's a cursory sniff of what turns out to be not much of anything.

Each year it's the same. After that first premature encounter, I forget about them, more interested instead in apples straight off the trees and juicy mandarins and clementines.

Then, when I least expect it, there's that perfume. It's low and subtle but also penetrating, floral and heady. It's unmistakably quince and I have to scour the shop, following my nose, to find the box.

Put a bowlful of quinces on the bench and their scent will fill the kitchen. They'll last 10-14 days unrefrigerated.

Quinces can be treated in a similar way to tart green apples. But while apples cook and break down quickly, quinces are best when cooked slowly for a prolonged period. They're meatier than apples, with more texture.

Once prepared—as in the “slow-baked” method on this page—quinces can be used in sweet or savoury dishes. They can be quickly pan-fried in butter or olive oil as an accompaniment to roast pork, or served in a reduction of their cooking juices with poached meats.

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QUINCE AND RICE PUDDING TART

200g Italian rice (arborio, vialone nano or carnaroli)
100g castor sugar
1 tsp vanilla essence
1l milk
250g unsalted butter
Pinch salt
6 egg yolks
60g sultanas
60g candied lemon peel
60g candied orange peel
1 slow-baked quince (see recipe below)
700g sweet shortcrust pastry
2 tbsp brown sugar

Place rice in a saucepan with sugar, vanilla, milk, butter and salt. Bring to the boil then reduce heat to a simmer. Stir well and keep simmering for 20 minutes or until milk has reduced and rice is cooked. Remove from heat and let mixture cool for 15 minutes. Stir in egg yolks, sultanas and peel and set aside. Slice baked quince into enough thin wedges to cover each tart. Grease and flour two 20cm-wide by 3cm-high tart cases. Preheat oven to 160C. Roll out shortcrust pastry and line each tart case. Spoon in mixture evenly between the two cases. Place quince slices on top of mixture, sprinkle brown sugar on top and bake for 20 minutes. Remove and cool to room temperature before serving.

Makes 2 tarts of 6-8 servings each
Wine Muscat de Beaumes de Venise.

SLOW-BAKED QUINCES

Quantities given here can be multiplied according to how many quinces are available. The amount of wine should not be automatically multiplied. Instead, use enough to just cover the quinces. Adjust sugar and spice quantities in proportion to the wine.

1kg quinces, well washed and dried
750ml white wine
150g castor sugar
Juice of 1 lemon
2 star anise
1 cinnamon stick
8 whole black peppercorns

Cut each quince into 8 wedges, top to bottom, leaving skin, seeds and core intact. Place in a baking dish that fits pieces snugly. Whisk wine, sugar and lemon juice together then pour into dish, covering quinces. Add water or more wine if required. Scatter spices in the wine and cover loosely with foil, poking some holes in it with a skewer to let steam out. Place dish in a preheated 100C oven for 8 hours. Remove from oven and cool, then they can be peeled and cored easily. Great for breakfast, with cream or ice-cream, and as an accompaniment to pork or other rich meats.

Wine Grappa or marc.

 Full bottle

QUAFFING

LAKE BREEZE SECTION 54
SHIRAZ 2009, \$25



Winemaker Greg Follett comes from a long line of Langhorne Creek farmers and grape growers. His Section 54 shiraz is true to its roots – unmistakably Langhorne Creek, with its wonderful plush, ripe tannins and hint of choc-mint. The '09 also has concentrated plum fruit, cassis and cedary oak nuances, all neatly integrated with an almost creamy texture mid-palate and lively acidity to balance out the full-bodied wine. Lots to like here and a real bargain, too.

TRYING

MCHENRY HOHNEN
ROCKY ROAD
CHARDONNAY 2010, \$37



Even if the weather is cold, braised pork with chardonnay is a fine match, especially if the wine in question is this stunner from West Australian producer McHenry Hohnen. Rocky Road is the name of the vineyard and it produces seriously exciting chardonnay, as the 2010 attests. A textural wine with mealy and grilled nut nuances and plenty of citrus and figs, it's creamy mid-palate, with the oak neatly integrated and lovely fine acidity driving it to a super long finish.

CELLARING

HEEMSKERK PINOT NOIR
2009, \$60



Winemaker Anna Pooley is crafting some thrilling wines at Heemskerk, especially chardonnay and pinot noir. This is complex and deeply scented, fuller bodied and structured but still medium weighted. It needs air to reveal all its nuances, including black fruit, warm spice and earthy fragrance. Expect fine acidity and firm, round yet poised tannins. It has a lot of presence, and will easily age for the next 10 years or so. Perfect with osso buco and polenta. Jane Faulkner

