

 Seasonal cook


Photo: Marco Del Grande

The flame game

STEVE MANFREDI gets fired up with a wood grill.

There's something very satisfying about cooking on a grill or barbecue. Maybe it's the charred surfaces of meat, especially the outer edges which firm up and protect the tender centre. Or perhaps it's the way the skin of a capsicum blisters and the flesh becomes creamy and intensely flavoured.

For me, the best results are obtained on a wood grill. Granted, there's a little more maintenance and cleaning but the results are worth it in the same way that a wood-fired pizza oven makes better-tasting pizza.

Once you've decided on a wood grill, the next critical choice is what type of wood to use. It has to be well-seasoned and dry. It should burn very

hot once reduced to coals. In Italy, olive wood is popular and readily available.

When I put a wood grill in my new Balla restaurant, I needed some advice on a good source of wood.

Who better to ask than Neil Perry? After all, the super-chef has wood grills all over the country.

His suggestion? Ironbark logs from the Blue Mountains felled more than 100 years ago. This hardwood burns super-hot and the flavour it gives meat, fish and vegetables is incredible.

smanfredi@smh.com.au
twitter.com/manfredistefano

WOOD-GRILLED VEGETABLES WITH SALSA SALMORIGLIO

The best flavour is obtained from a wood-burning or charcoal barbecue.

FOR THE SALSA SALMORIGLIO:

Juice of 2 lemons
Zest of 1 lemon
1 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 garlic clove, minced
1 cup fresh oregano leaves, chopped
½ cup sage leaves, roughly chopped
1 tbsp finely chopped rosemary
3 anchovies, chopped
Salt and pepper

Whisk all ingredients together in a bowl and season to taste. Rest at least one hour before using.

Makes 2 cups

FOR THE VEGETABLES:

4 spring onions, cut in half
1 red capsicum, seeded and cut into 8
1 yellow capsicum, seeded and cut into 8
1 fennel bulb, trimmed, cut into quarters and blanched
8 thick asparagus spears, tough ends trimmed
1 medium eggplant, cut into 1cm rounds
2 zucchini, cut into 5mm rounds
1 radicchio head, trimmed and cut top to bottom into 8
3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
Salt


Lightly brush vegetables with olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Grill over a wood grill or barbecue. Check each by skewering with a knife. They all take different times to cook. Dress with salmoriglio.

Serves 4 as a first course (pictured) or 6-8 as an accompaniment
Wine Pinot grigio

GRILLED SWORDFISH ROLLS WITH BREADCRUMBS

40g breadcrumbs
25g grated pecorino cheese
2 tbsp finely chopped parsley
1 tbsp finely chopped capers
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
800g swordfish, cut into 12 slices
1 cup salsa salmoriglio (see above)

Combine all ingredients except swordfish and salsa in a bowl and mix. Lay each swordfish slice flat and sprinkle evenly with 1 tbsp stuffing within 2cm of entire edge. Fold 2cm of the left and right edges of the slice into the centre and roll bottom to top, securing with a toothpick. Brush rolls with a quarter of the salsa and grill, turning once, until done. Should take 2 minutes per side. Serve with remaining salsa and a green salad.
Serves 4 as a main course
Wine Passopisciaro

 Full bottle

CELLARING

MOUNT MAJURA
VINEYARD TEMPRANILLO
2010, \$42



Tempranillo has become Mount Majura's flagship wine. Winemaker Frank van de Loo has an appreciation of the variety, caring for it in the vineyard first and then treating it gently in the winery. The result is a highly fragrant wine loaded with spice and floral nuances. There's plenty of bright fruit on the palate, with savoury cigar-box complexity and beautiful balance. Decant and enjoy with spicy pork spare ribs or consider cellaring up to 10 years.

TRYING

MOUNT HORROCKS
WATERVALE RIESLING
2011, \$32



Many 2011 rieslings from Clare and Eden valleys are turning out to be very smart indeed. And what's great about this stunning '11 from Mount Horrocks is that it's gorgeous as an aperitif. It's fragrant as anything, with ginger spice and blossom, some lime-juice freshness and tang with sherbet-like acidity. Despite all this, it's gentle and lingering, with a long, dry finish. It's an immensely pleasurable drink that matches very well with pork rillettes or seafood.

CELEBRATING

KRUG GRANDE CUVÉE,
\$290



Krug is the ultimate luxury label, so if you have the opportunity to enjoy this multi-vintage champagne, you should take it. The reward is a stylish drink that's rich and powerful, yet shows great finesse and drive. It starts with seemingly endless fine bead that bursts onto the palate, followed by candied and dried fruit nuances melded with exotic spice, toasty notes and a dry, super-long finish. A truly stunning champagne.
Jane Faulkner