

 Seasonal cook


Photo: Marco Del Grande

Frost bites

Frozen treats rekindle childhood memories
for STEVE MANFREDI.

Remember those snow cones you loved to eat at the show when you were a kid? That pyramid of pearly white ice was flavoured with your choice of syrup, each brightly coloured so there was no mistaking the flavour – green for mint, red for raspberry, yellow for pineapple and so on.

What I didn't know then was that a form of the snow cone was the precursor to our modern sorbets and ice-creams.

Ice and snow harvesting goes way back. Mesopotamia probably had ice houses as far back as 2000BC and the Greeks and Romans carried snow down from nearby mountains to use as a preservative and to cool wine and other drinks.

The Arabs brought sherbet-iced drinks flavoured with fruit purees such as pomegranate, cherry and quince to Europe. But it was in the Kingdom of Naples, under Spanish rule, where

flavoured ices took off to eventually become what we think of as modern gelato or ice-cream.

Making smooth – as silk gelato and sorbet is difficult to do at home if you don't have an electric churner. This machine works by churning and freezing a liquid at the same time, inside a container. By keeping the liquid moving, ice crystals don't have time to develop and the result is frozen but very fine-textured ice.

Granita is relatively simple to achieve because, as the name suggests, a certain amount of grainy texture is desirable. Rather than just freezing the mixture solid into an ice block, the crystal development is restricted by whisking the mixture to a slush every so often and then refreezing. The result will take you back to your childhood. smanfredi@sm.com.au
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LEMON AND MINT GRANITA

Granita keeps in the freezer for up to three days. After that, the lemon oxidises, developing bitter flavours and a dull taste.

2 cups mint leaves
1.25 litres filtered or still mineral water
190g castor sugar
250ml lemon juice, freshly squeezed

Wash mint leaves thoroughly and dry well. Place in airtight container with 1 litre filtered water. Refrigerate 24 hours. Cold infusion works better than heat with mint – it imparts a fresh flavour without “stemmy” bitterness and doesn't leech the green from the leaves, keeping the granita white. Bring remaining 250ml water and sugar to the boil. Remove as soon as it's boiling and cool. Sieve mint infusion through muslin to remove any fine particles. Stir into cooled sugar syrup with lemon juice. Place in a clean, shallow plastic container with a lid and put into the freezer. After an hour, it should begin to freeze. Remove and give mixture a quick whisk so it forms small crystals rather than setting hard. Repeat every 15 minutes until set.

Serves 8-10 (pictured)

Wine Late-picked or botrytis riesling.

BERRY GRANITA

This granita can be made from a single type of berry, such as raspberry or strawberry, or a combination. If using strawberries, they need to be ripe. Remove any tough, unripe part near the stem.

400g berries
140ml filtered or still mineral water
170g castor sugar
Juice of 1 large lemon

Place all ingredients into a food processor and pulse to a thick, smooth purée. Place in a shallow plastic container with a lid and put into the freezer. After an hour, it should begin to freeze. Remove and give mixture a quick whisk so it forms small crystals rather than setting hard. Repeat every 15 minutes until set.

Serves 8-10

Wine Champagne or prosecco.

 Full bottle

QUAFFING

CHALMERS NERO D'AVOLA ROSATO 2011, \$20



It's really exciting to be drinking Australia's first nero d'Avola rosato, a juicy Sicilian red, with fruit grown at Heathcote in central Victoria. This wine is gorgeous, with the palest onion hue and a delicate nose of dried herbs, with a hint of strawberries and cream. It really comes alive on the palate. Dry with some fruit sweetness and creaminess, it is savoury and textural with crunchy acidity and a mouth-watering fresh finish.

TRYING

GAIA THALASSITIS 2010, \$36



The label says “white dry wine”, which gives little away, though the Santorini appellation can only mean assyrtiko – the island's more illustrious variety.

It's the most brilliant white for summer because assyrtiko is almost thirst-quenching, due to its mineral acidity and savoury nuances alongside a marvellous saltiness with dried herbs. Gaia is one of the top Greek producers based on the mainland but it makes three styles of assyrtiko from Santorini. I love its immediate appeal. Super dry on finish, it would be great with fried whitebait.

CELEBRATING

RUINART NON-VINTAGE ROSE, \$100



Considering Ruinart's vintage 1998 rose hovers around \$650, this non-vintage seems a bargain by comparison. It's a lovely champagne in its own right. A blend of chardonnay and pinot noir, it has an enticing copper-salmon hue and a smoky, almost iodine character that adds some depth to its core of red summer-berry fruit. Rather spicy with a long, dry, fresh finish, it is a perfect aperitif. Just don't chill it too much.

Jane Faulkner