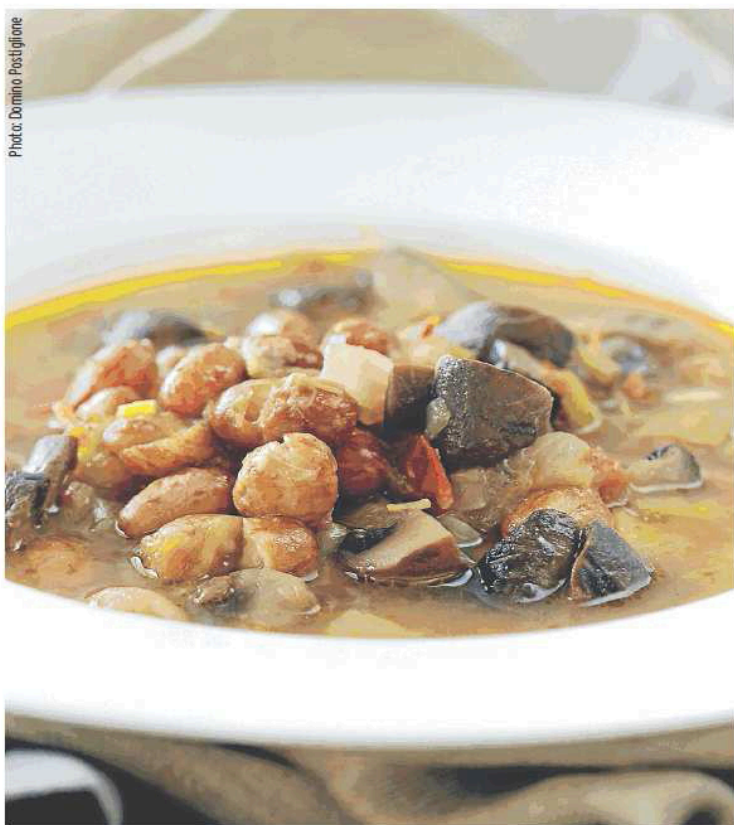


Seasonal cook

Photo: Domino Postiglione



# Escape pods

Pre-packaged freshly shelled borlotti beans get into hungry bellies faster, writes STEVE MANFREDI.

**M**y local fruit shop often has small trays of podded peas. It's a service appreciated by the shop's time-poor customers and it gives the cashiers something to do when it's slow. Occasionally, when the season permits, there are also punnets of shelled broad beans.

Enterprising farmers Michael and Jina Tripodi have now taken another bean, the borlotti, and shelled it in convenient 300-gram packets. Growing up in Italian farming families at Lake Boga, near Swan Hill, they were used to shelling beans of all types for the family meal.

Their farm has traditionally grown mostly stonefruit but, because of the rise in the Australian dollar, exports have become harder. A

test planting of borlotti beans a few years ago produced an outstanding crop.

The Tripodis tell me they prefer to distribute their borlotti beans through specialist retailers and greengrocers, as well as wholesale market agents in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

Following this success, they're planning other types of fresh-shelled beans such as cannellini and flageolet.

For details of where to buy borlotti beans, see [ediblegems.com.au/our-retailers-greengrocers](http://ediblegems.com.au/our-retailers-greengrocers)

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## BORLOTTI BEAN AND MUSHROOM SOUP

Fresh borlotti beans may not always be available. Dried beans can be used but they must be soaked in cold water overnight. Then drain and place in a pot, well covered with water. Bring to the boil and keep simmering until they are tender. Drain again and add to the soup.

- 600g mixed mushrooms, such as Swiss browns, buttons or shiitake
- 6 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 small leek, trimmed and cut into 1cm-wide rounds
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 celery heart, chopped
- 200g shelled fresh borlotti beans
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- Salt and pepper
- Grated pecorino cheese, to serve

Cut mushrooms into bite-size slices, removing any tough stems, especially from shiitake. Heat 4 tbsp oil in a heavy-based soup pot and gently fry leek, garlic and celery about 2 minutes until soft. Raise heat and add mushrooms, stirring as they wilt. Once soft, about 2-3 minutes, add 2 litres water, beans and tomatoes. Bring to the boil, reduce heat to simmer and cook slowly until beans start breaking up – about 2 hours. Remove from heat, season with salt and pepper and drizzle remaining oil on top. Serve with bread and a little grated pecorino.

**Serves 6 as a main course or 10 as a small first course (pictured)**  
Wine Dolcetto or barbera

## BORLOTTI BEAN PUREE WITH OLIVES AND RADICCHIO

Great on its own with chunky toast or as an accompaniment to grilled meats, fish or vegetables.

- 200g shelled fresh borlotti beans
- 200g potatoes, washed, skin on
- 8 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 red onion, peeled and diced
- 1 small head radicchio, trimmed, chopped
- 50g large green olives, pitted, chopped
- 2 tbsp white wine vinegar
- Salt and pepper

Place borlotti beans in a pot, cover with water, bring to the boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and keep cooking for 30-40 minutes until tender. Steam potatoes until they can be pierced easily with a skewer. Strain beans, reserving 1 cup cooking liquid. Peel potatoes and mash with beans, half the olive oil and a little cooking liquid. Heat remaining olive oil in a pan and gently fry onion until soft. Add radicchio and fry until wilted. Stir into puree with olives and vinegar. Season to taste.

**Serves 6 as a first course**  
Wine Aged semillon or chardonnay

## Full bottle

### QUAFFING

VASSE FELIX SAUVIGNON BLANC SEMILLON 2011, \$24



The Margaret River region produces some of the best sauvignon blanc semillon blends. Each variety balances out any dominating characteristics. The grassy character of the semillon adds a dimension to the sauvignon blanc and tempers its tropical fruit notes. This excellent wine from Vasse Felix has added complexity from some barrel ferment. It's very fresh and refreshing with nutty, creamy nuances. Way too easy to drink all day or with some flathead.

### TRYING

DE BORTOLI YARRA VALLEY RESERVE RIESLING 2011, \$30



Sarah Fagan is a young, intuitive winemaker. Working vintage in Germany a couple of years ago has given her an insight into the complexity of riesling, a less common variety in the valley. There are several under the De Bortoli label, with the reserve made from estate-grown fruit. It's a downright delicious drink. Fine and pure with some meyer lemon and ginger spice with a hint of sweetness that adds to its weight. Serve on its own or with grilled whiting and aioli.

### CELLARING

ROCCA DI MONTEGROSSI CHIANTI CLASSICO 2009, \$47



The 2009 chiantis are drinking wonderfully. This offering from Rocca di Montegrossi, a new producer to our shores, will easily age for another 10 years. The key variety is sangiovese, often ameliorated by indigenous Tuscan grapes such as canaiolo and colorino. This has a wonderful garnet hue, with earthy spice scents and some cherry and plum notes. Just the thing with grilled steak.

Jane Faulkner

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