

 Seasonal cook


Photo: Marco Del Grande

Fruitful harvest

A bumper crop is a mixed blessing, writes STEVE MANFREDI.

FOR those who love stone fruit, it has been an abundant season. But for the farmers who grow peaches, nectarines, apricots, plums and cherries, an abundant season is only a good thing if they can sell their crop at a decent price.

Back in November, Nathan Cutri, a grower from Woorin, in Victoria, was already warning of lower-than-expected prices because of an oversupply and a high Australian dollar.

Australian stone fruit exporters have the advantage of an early start to the season, with a window between November and January. The largest market is Hong Kong, gateway to China. Second-generation stone fruit grower Michael Tripodi, of Lake Boga, also in Victoria,

exported about 15 per cent of his 1000-tonne production this season, all to Hong Kong and all before Chinese New Year.

He says that just before Chinese New Year, Chile flooded the Hong Kong market with 1700 containers of cherries, spelling the end of the export season for Australian stone fruit.

"Chile can land a case of nectarines in Hong Kong for US\$10 [A\$9.35]. We can't grow them at that price," he says.

If the fruit is not sold overseas, growers must sell domestically. More fruit on the local market means lower prices. Good for us but not great for farmers.

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

STONE FRUIT SANGRIA

Use red wine that's not big or woody. A medium-body tempranillo, grenache or sangiovese will do the job.

- ½ cup fresh orange juice
- 250ml red wine
- 2 tbs castor sugar
- 2 tbs Grand Marnier
- 1 stick cinnamon
- 8 whole black peppercorns
- 2 lemons
- 2 yellow peaches
- 2 white peaches
- 4 apricots
- 2 white nectarines
- 2 yellow nectarines
- ½ cup mint leaves

Sieve orange juice into a large bowl. Add red wine, sugar, Grand Marnier, cinnamon stick and peppercorns. Peel thin strips from lemons, making sure not to take any white pith. Add strips to red wine mix and stir well. Peel all stone fruit and cut into wedges, adding to the mixture, along with mint leaves. Stir well and cover bowl with cling film. Refrigerate for 2 hours. When ready, serve in bowls as dessert. Also good for a weekend breakfast.

Serves 6 (pictured)
Wine Brachetto d'acqui

POACHED PEACHES WITH ZABAGLIONE

- 6 medium-size freestone peaches
- 6 tbs sugar
- 750ml sweet white wine, such as moscato, porphyry or late-picked riesling
- 4 egg yolks
- 3 tbs castor sugar
- 4 tbs hazelnut liqueur
- 4 tbs roasted hazelnuts, peeled and crushed

Wash peaches and dry. Place in a saucepan with sugar and sweet wine. Bring to boil. Reduce to a simmer for 5 minutes. Remove peaches and cool. Cut in half, remove stones and peel. Place in poaching liquid in a sealed container and refrigerate until needed. Fill a large saucepan about a third full with water and bring to the boil. Meanwhile, in a stainless-steel bowl that will fit over the saucepan, beat egg yolks, castor sugar and hazelnut liqueur until pale and creamy. Add 5 tablespoons of peach poaching liquid and whisk in. Place bowl over saucepan and turn down to a simmer, making sure the bottom of the bowl does not touch the water. Keep whisking for 5-8 minutes or until zabaglione thickens. Place in a container to cool before storing in refrigerator. Serve two peach halves for each person with some zabaglione and finish with crushed, roasted hazelnuts on top.

Serves 6 as dessert
Wine Late-picked or botrytis riesling or semillon

 Full bottle

QUAFFING

ARGYROS ATLANTIS 2010, \$28

Argyros, Santorini's top producer, makes this easy-drinking white under its Atlantis label. It is a blend of mostly assyrtiko, with a splash of aidani and athiri, two other rare indigenous Greek varieties. This is a great drink, with all the vibrancy and steeliness of assyrtiko, plus distinct sea-salty and sage nuances. The aidani adds lemon-curd creaminess and the athiri a sweet, fruity character. Nevertheless this is savoury. It's refreshing and the finish is lovely and dry. Perfect with a bowl of spaghetti marinara.



TRYING

BANNOCKBURN SAUVIGNON BLANC 2011, \$29

Winemaker Michael Glover pushes boundaries in a bid to question how best to make wine. As a result, he produces complex, fascinating styles, such as this unusual, and wonderful, sauvignon blanc. There is so much going on with this wine and, while there's a distinct leaviness to it, it is tempered by citrus zest, spice, a toasty-smoky character and creamed honey. It is not a fruit-driven wine. Definitely a sauvignon blanc to drink with food, rather than on its own.



CELLARING

FRANKLAND ESTATE NETLEY ROAD VINEYARD RIESLING 2011, \$27

For riesling fans, Frankland Estate needs no introduction. It produces some of the most thrilling rieslings, including Netley Road, with its vines planted in 1966. The precision in this wine is astonishing. It is so pure – mineral and slaty with the merest hint of citrus and florals. Complex, deep and beautifully weighted on the palate, its backbone of fine acidity drives it to a super-long finish. Fabulous now but has years ahead of it.

Jane Faulkner

