

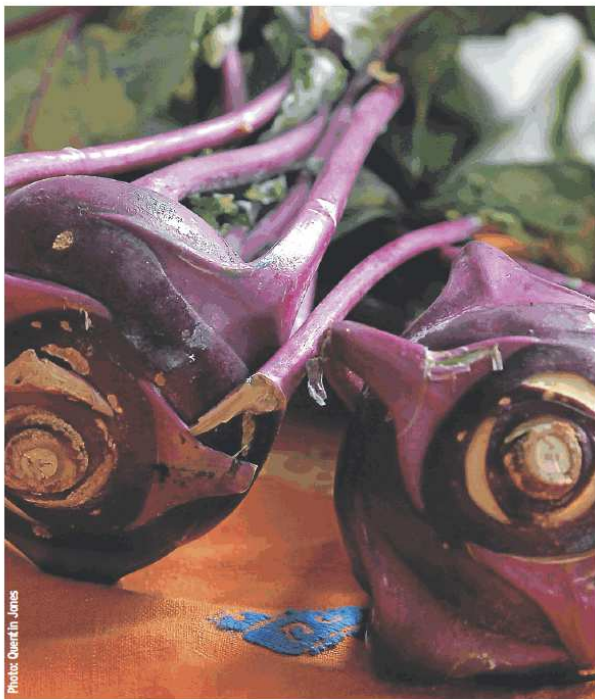
 Seasonal cook


Photo: Quentin Jones

Light bulbs

STEVE MANFREDI unravels the mysteries of kohlrabi.

Of all the vegetables, kohlrabi is the one I get asked about most often. The questions are mostly about how to prepare it and the simplest answer is to peel the bulbs, cut the crunchy flesh into batons and dress with good olive oil, salt and pepper. Eat as a salad or crudite.

Those of us who love broccoli stems will recognise the taste of kohlrabi flesh. Both are part of the large brassica family and have the unmistakable flavour of rapa or turnip.

Our recent restaurant garden crop provided much more than we could use, so we pickled the excess. To do this, peel five or six kohlrabis and cut into one-centimetre-thick, bite-size pieces. Place in a bowl and sprinkle with one level teaspoon of salt and one tablespoon of peppercorns. Cover

with wine, rice vinegar or apple cider vinegar and mix well. Seal with cling-film and refrigerate for two days or more. Drain, dress with extra virgin olive oil and serve as antipasto.

For an unusual accompaniment to grilled or roast meat, take one kohlrabi bulb per person. Peel and cut into two-centimetre dice. Heat one tablespoon of olive oil in a pan on moderate heat and brown kohlrabi cubes for five to six minutes, stirring. Add half a cup of water, cover and simmer for another five to six minutes. Remove lid and evaporate any remaining liquid. Add one tablespoon of balsamic vinegar, season with salt and pepper, and stir. Finish with a tablespoon of chopped chives.

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

BRAISED KOHLRABI WITH LENTILS

This dish is made in separate parts, which are then mixed together.

FOR THE LENTILS

- 1 celery heart
- 1 carrot
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 onion
- 5cm leek stem
- 1 sprig rosemary
- 1 sprig thyme
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 250g lentils, washed
- 100ml tomato passata
- Salt and pepper

Place vegetables, rosemary and thyme in a food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Heat olive oil in a braising pan and lightly fry half the vegetables. Reserve other half for braised kohlrabi (below). Keep frying and stirring vegetables for 2-3 minutes until fragrant. Add lentils and passata and cover with water. Simmer until lentils are soft. Add more water if necessary. Once cooked, season with salt and pepper.

FOR THE KOHLRABI

- 2 kohlrabi
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Reserved finely chopped vegetables
- 500g canned tomatoes
- 2 tbsp chopped parsley
- Salt and pepper

Peel kohlrabis and slice flesh into 5mm-thick bite-size pieces. Heat olive oil and gently fry chopped vegetables and kohlrabi for 2-3 minutes until fragrant. Mash tomatoes with a fork and add, with liquid, to vegetables with a few good pinches of salt. Simmer until sauce has reduced and thickened, stirring occasionally. To serve, mix together with lentils and parsley. Season to taste.

Serves 6 as a first course

Wine Australian rondinella-corvina blend

KOHLRABI WITH SAUSAGE AND SPINACH

- 3 kohlrabi
- 300g good-quality fennel and pork sausages
- 1 bunch spinach
- 3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 125ml dry white wine
- Salt and pepper

Peel kohlrabi and cut flesh into 1cm dice. Cut raw sausages into 3cm pieces. Trim root ends of spinach and wash leaves thoroughly in cold water. Drain and pat dry with clean tea towel. Heat 2 tsp olive oil on moderate heat in a pan. Add diced kohlrabi and sausage pieces and cook for 3-4 minutes. Add wine and keep cooking until all liquid evaporates. Add spinach and remaining 1 tsp olive oil. Stir and cook until spinach is tender. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Serves 4 as a first course

Wine Semillon

 Full bottle

QUAFFING

TIM ADAMS CABERNET MALBEC 2007, \$25



Cabernet sauvignon from the Clare Valley has a wonderful fragrance and fineness on the palate. The 20 per cent or so of malbec adds robust tannins, but overall it's ripe and grainy, with a hint of floral and fruit sweetness. While not overly complex, it is a delicious, earthy, easy-drinking dry wine with hints of coffee, mocha and cassis. Drink now, though it will last about eight years in the right cellaring conditions. Perfect with lamb shanks infused with Middle Eastern spices.

TRYING

FIGHTING GULLY ROAD BEECHWORTH CHARDONNAY 2010, \$31



I'm loving this chardonnay, made with fruit sourced from Beechworth's oldest vineyard. The Smiths vineyard was planted in 1978 and Mark Walpole of Fight Gully Road took over the site recently. The chardonnay opens up to reveal a core of ripe stone fruit, adding to its richness and roundness on the palate. It's tempered by bright, natural acidity and balance. There is thoughtful and restrained winemaking here, ensuring this savoury wine is true to its terroir. A wonderful chardonnay.

CELEBRATING

PIZZINI RUBACUORI 2005, \$10



Rubacuori is Pizzini's top sangiovese, hence the price. The 2005 is the best to date. What I admire about this King Valley wine is how the Pizzini's try to attain savouriness over fruit sweetness. After decanting, the '05 also reveals warm spice mixed with sour and black cherries, cranberry tartness and layers of complexity. It's powerful and dense yet medium-bodied and restrained, with plenty of lively acidity to cut through a hearty osso buco.

Jane Faulkner