

Seasonal cook



Photo: Dominio Pesticione

SALT COD WITH LEEKS

- 750g baccala (salt cod)
- 500g leek, washed and trimmed
- 6 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 stick celery, finely chopped
- 1 carrot, finely chopped
- 4 tbsp finely chopped parsley
- 1/2 cup basil leaves, chopped
- 1 tsp chilli flakes
- 450g canned tomatoes, pureed
- Salt and pepper
- 12 slices country bread

Soak salt cod in a large tub of cold water for 24-36 hours, changing every 6-8 hours. I do this in the laundry and let the tap run slowly into the tub so I don't have to remember to change it. Once that's done, drain and cut cod into large pieces to fit in a large pot. Fill with water, bring to the boil and simmer for 25-30 minutes. Drain, let it cool a little and shred cod into flakes, discarding any bones. Set aside. Cut leek in half lengthways and slice into 1cm rounds. Heat 4 tbsp oil and lightly fry leek, onion, garlic, celery and carrot with parsley, basil and chilli until soft. Add tomatoes and simmer for 15 minutes. Add flaked salt cod, stir and cook for another 5-6 minutes. Season to taste with salt, if needed, and plenty of pepper. Grill bread and brush with remaining olive oil. Serve hot.

Serves 6 as a substantial first course (pictured)
Wine Italian or Australian vermentino or fiano

LEEKs BRAISED WITH PANCETTA

- 1kg large leeks, trimmed
- Salt
- 50g pancetta, cut to half-matchstick lengths
- 1 small carrot, peeled and finely sliced
- 1 small onion, peeled and finely sliced
- 250ml chicken stock
- Juice of half a lemon
- 25g salted butter, softened

Wash and cut leeks into equal lengths of about 10-12 centimetres. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to the boil and plunge leeks in. Simmer for 10 minutes then drain. Scatter pancetta sticks on the bottom of an ovenproof dish along with carrot and onion slices. Lay leek pieces on top and pour in chicken stock. Lightly salt and cover dish with foil. Bake in a preheated 160C oven for 90 minutes. Meanwhile, work lemon juice and butter together with a spoon until well incorporated. When leeks have finished cooking, remove from oven and place on a plate. Whisk lemon butter into remaining liquid, replace leeks and return, uncovered, to oven for 5 minutes. Serve hot.

Serves 4 as a first course
Wine Chardonnay or vlognier

Full bottle

TRYING

DOMAINE DE LA LOUVETRIE MUSCADET LE FIEF DU BREIL 2010, \$37

Muscadet is made from the variety melon de bourgogne. It's usually a fresh, easy-drinking style. While not complicated, it can be complex, especially from the outstanding producer La Louvretie. This is from a single vineyard, Le Fief du Breil, and layers of complexity are built into the wine. It still has all the varietal muscadet characters: tangy, flinty, smoky and super dry, with salty nuances. The impression of minerality makes this an intriguing, moreish drink. Fabulous.



CELLARING

QUEALY MUSK CREEK PINOT NOIR 2009, \$40

There's much to like in this juicy, tangy and tannic pinot noir. It's wonderfully fragrant, with Asian spices, and earthy, too, with sour and ripe black cherries plus tangy rhubarb and plenty of cleansing acidity. It's medium bodied with some grip on the finish and it will continue to mellow over the next five years. Otherwise, give it plenty of air to open up.



CELEBRATING

VASSE FELIX HEYTESBURY CHARDONNAY 2010, \$60

If there is one chardonnay that has blitzed the field, winning top accolades in just about every major wine show, it is this stunning wine from Margaret River. It's one of the finest chardonnays I have ever had the pleasure of drinking. It's refined, elegant and poised; complex, yet subtle. It has citrus and leesy nutty nuances, a lovely mineral-like acidity and palate weight. There's incredible depth before an ultra-fine, lingering finish. Sheer restraint here from one of the most talented winemakers, Virginia Willcock.

Jane Faulkner



Mixed company

Pairing unlikely ingredients can produce winning taste sensations, writes STEVE MANFREDI.

After all these years cooking for work and pleasure, I'm still surprised when I come across new dishes that combine ingredients in such a seamless way that the final flavour is greater than the sum of its parts. The makers of modernist food attempt to find new combinations, but rather than coming up with new dishes, the results are mostly constructions on the plate that look pretty.

Recently I dined at Michael Ryan's Beechworth restaurant, Provenance. He served a small ramekin of freshly made silken tofu with new-season salmon roe. Simple enough, but it was new to me and it's a taste I'll remember.

Taste and memory led me to a similar combination, though one I'm familiar with and have been for a long time, which is the main recipe this week: the sweet, salty, mineral and fish classic of salt cod with leeks.

That sweet and salty pairing is also evident in the second recipe that combines leeks with pancetta. Improvising from that point, successful partners for leeks are leg ham, bacon, duck and quail.

For breakfast tomorrow, I'm making soft poached eggs with fried leeks and prosciutto. smanfredi@smh.com.au twitter.com/manfredistefano