

 Seasonal cook

Photo: Steven Siewert



The square root

Though much maligned, the humble turnip packs a punch in hearty winter fare, writes **STEVE MANFREDI**.

Turnips, sometimes seen as a rather meagre and unfashionable vegetable, have been the butt of many jokes and even a symbol of poverty.

In the *Blackadder* TV series, set in Elizabethan England, the turnip is an object of ridicule. Baldrick, *Blackadder's* servant as played by Tony Robinson, has a particular fondness for them. His speciality is "turnip surprise", the surprise being that the dish contains nothing but turnips.

Thankfully, there are some who see the turnip as a noble vegetable. The Slow Food Organisation has added the Caprauna turnip, grown in high altitudes between Liguria and Piemonte in north-west Italy, to its register of the world's finest agricultural products.

Across the water, on the island of Sardinia, there is a soup made from turnips and beans. Its preparation is simple: soak 300 grams of cannellini beans the night before, then drain and rinse. Lightly fry two minced garlic cloves and two tablespoons of chopped parsley in three tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil. Add beans and cover with water. Cook until tender, then season with salt and pepper. Meanwhile, cook 400 grams of peeled turnips in simmering water until tender. Drain, slice and distribute into six bowls. Add a handful of chopped, day-old bread to each and ladle soup over. Serve with grated pecorino.

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

TURNIP AND HORSE RADISH FRITTERS

For the fritters:
350g turnips, peeled and coarsely grated
2 eggs
80g fresh ricotta
50g fresh horseradish, finely grated
¼ cup coarse-cut breadcrumbs
Salt and freshly ground pepper

For coating the fritters:
Plain flour
2-3 eggs, beaten into egg wash
Fine breadcrumbs
Extra virgin olive oil for frying

Once turnips have been grated, pat dry with a clean tea towel. In a bowl, combine all the ingredients for the fritters, season to taste and mix well. If turnips are a little wet, add another handful of breadcrumbs so the mixture forms a ball in your hand without falling apart. Roll small patties the size of 20c pieces until all the mixture is used up. Coat each ball lightly in flour, egg and then breadcrumbs. Pour enough oil into a saucepan to submerge fritters. Heat oil to 175C. It should be hot enough that when you place a breadcrumb in the oil, it floats and sizzles instantly, but not so hot that the fritters burn. Fry until golden brown on both sides. Serve with a dipping sauce such as salsa verde or tomato and chilli.

Serves 6 as a first course or more as canapés (pictured)

Wine Semillon-pauignon blanc blend

TURNIP GNOCCHI

300g turnips
2 tbsp unsalted butter
1 eschalo, finely sliced
1 clove garlic, finely sliced
4 sage leaves
½ tsp cumin seed
200g two-day-old bread, cruds die removed, chopped into small dice
2 eggs
50g ricotta
50g parmesan, grated
Salt

Peel turnips and boil in plenty of salted water until tender. A skewer should pierce the flesh. Drain, cool a little then chop and puree in a food processor. Place in a tea towel and squeeze out as much water as possible. Heat butter in a pan and lightly fry eschalo, garlic, sage and cumin for a minute or so. Remove from heat and let cool. Place in a bowl and mix with bread, eggs, ricotta and parmesan. Add pureed turnips, season with salt and let mixture rest for at least 30 minutes. Form mixture into balls with a diameter of 4-5cm and cook like gnocchi in boiling salted water. They are ready when they rise to the surface. Serve with burnt butter and parmesan.

Serves 4-6 as a first course
Wine Gruner veltliner or sylvaner

 Full bottle

TRYING

HURLEY VINEYARDS
HOMMAGE PINOT NOIR
2009, \$60

Based at Balharring on the Mornington Peninsula, Hurley Vineyards makes pinot noir in small quantities. The Hommage 2009 is beautifully poised and pretty. It is restrained and medium-bodied, with delicate and fine lacy tannins, and refreshing acidity. Though not a long term proposition, it is approachable and lovely now. The perfect food match is a rich mushroom soup – not creamy, but made from real chicken stock with lots of different fungi.



CELLARING

YALUMBA FDRIA BAROSSA
CABERNET SAUVIGNON
AND SHIRAZ 2009, \$43

FDR stands for fine dry red. It is Yalumba's contribution to a tradition of blending red varieties. This one combines cabernet sauvignon and shiraz. The result is a fragrant, concentrated wine with lots of fruit sweetness and silky tannins. With leafy freshness and a hint of mint, sage and black olives, it has all the youthful lift you would expect of a Barossa cab sav-shiraz blend. It has years ahead of it and would be fantastic with braised beef cheeks cooked in stock and a splash of the wine.



CELEBRATING

HAHNDORF HILL
WINERY BLUEBLOOD
BLAUFRANKISCH
2010, \$35

Blaufrankisch is an Austrian variety, yet here it is growing well in the Adelaide Hills. It is a beauty of a wine: supple with juicy, fleshy fruit, from cherries to blueberries. Spicy, pure and utterly appealing, it is medium-bodied with smooth, ripe tannins and a thread of fine acidity. Its balance of acid and tannin to fruit, and approachability, makes it a great alternative to shiraz. A great match to minestrone on a winter's day.

Jane Faulkner

