

Seasonal cook



Photo: Quentin Jones

# Top shelf picks

STEVE MANFREDI names his favourite new cookbooks.

I'm always happy either giving or receiving cookbooks for Christmas. The problem is choice. I've waded through quite a few of the new titles and I have four suggestions you might like to consider.

The biggest book is the new edition of *The Silver Spoon* by Phaidon. It's packed with more than 2000 recipes and lots of great photos. It's about as comprehensive a book on Italian cooking as you're likely to find and would suit a home cook as well as a professional. There's also a section of menus by celebrated chefs from around the world.

For the cook who loves art, it has to be Lucio Galletto and David Dale's *The Art of Pasta*. The recipes range from simple to complex and are beautifully shot by Anson Smart, while Sydney

artist Luke Sciberras's stunning watercolours are something else.

For the baker – novice or advanced – Dan Lepard's *Short & Sweet* is essential. I have many of his books and I've yet to find a recipe that doesn't work. It's available as an e-book or hardback.

Finally, Giorgio Locatelli's *Made in Sicily* will make everyone who reads it smile. His stories and dishes from this mysterious island are utterly captivating and his informative chapter on its wines gives a great insight into one of the most interesting wine regions in the world right now.

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

## RUM BABAS

This simple, light and delicious dessert adapted from Dan Lepard's *Short & Sweet* is a perfect alternative to Christmas pudding. The babas can be made ahead of time and heated in a microwave before soaking and serving.

- 100ml warm milk
- 1½ tsp dried yeast
- 150g plain flour
- 1 egg, plus 1 yolk
- 1½ tsp castor sugar
- ¾ tsp fine salt
- 50g unsalted butter, softened, plus extra for lining moulds
- 6-8 tsp dark rum
- Whipped cream, to serve

- FOR THE SYRUP:**
- 600g castor sugar
  - 500ml water
  - 6 thin strips of pith-free lemon peel
  - 1 vanilla pod, split lengthways

Rinse bowl of electric mixer with boiling water, wipe dry then add milk, yeast and 50g flour. Stir well and leave for 15 minutes until foamy. Add remaining flour, egg and yolk, sugar and salt and beat for two minutes. Finally, add butter and beat for another two minutes. Cover bowl and leave in a warm place until doubled in height. Butter insides of six 100ml-capacity muffin moulds. Half fill with dough and set aside to rise further. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 190C. Make syrup by heating sugar, water, lemon peel and vanilla. Simmer for five minutes. When dough has reached top of moulds, bake for 25 minutes. Remove from oven and unmoil babas. Place in a deep bowl and pour hot syrup on top. Sit a plate over them to keep them dunked under syrup. Serve cooled and split in half with a little rum drizzled on top and cream on the side.

**Serves six (pictured)**  
Wine Limoncello liqueur

## GREEN BEAN SALAD

This dish is from Giorgio Locatelli's *Made in Sicily*.

- 2 eschalots, chopped finely
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp white wine vinegar
- 400g green beans, trimmed
- 50g-80g pecorino or parmesan, grated, to taste
- Salt

Put eschalots in a bowl with oil and vinegar. Blanch beans in boiling salted water for a minute, then drain and toss with eschalot mixture and plenty of grated pecorino or parmesan. Taste and season with salt if necessary. Remember, the cheese will be quite salty.

**Serves four as an antipasto or side dish with meat or fish**  
Wine White Sicilian carricante or catarratto

## Full bottle

### TRYING

- FRAMINGHAM WINES
- F-SERIES RIESLING
- KABINETT 2011, \$35



When it comes to making riesling from dry, sweet and utterly complex styles, Marlborough winemaker Andrew Hedley is in a class of his own. The Framingham range, which in 2011 includes several botrytised styles, means there's a riesling to suit everyone. There's no botrytis in this kabinett-style, so it's quite light, vibrant and fresh, with plenty of citrus and lemon curd, very fine acidity and mineral, pebbly notes that freshen the palate.

### CELLARING

- TYRRELL'S WINES VAT 9
- HUNTER SHIRAZ 2009, \$91



It's easy to spot Tyrrell's Wines – the bottles are usually plastered with gold stickers indicating how many trophies and medals they've won. The Vat 9 shiraz is no different. This elegant drop is superbright, crimson-hued and pure, with loads of dark fruits, yet still in the savoury spectrum. It's fragrant, full of earthy spice and liquorice – even Redskins lollies. Enjoy the creamy mid-palate and fine tannins. A beautiful, beguiling, medium-body shiraz with decades ahead of it.

### CELEBRATING

- BROWN BROTHERS BRUT
- NON-VINTAGE, \$23



This non-vintage always sits at an exceptional price bracket yet it is much more than a crowd-pleaser, punching way above its weight. A blend of the classic varieties pinot noir, chardonnay and pinot meunier, there's plenty of bead and creamy mousse on the palate, alongside lemon zest and curd, a touch of nougat and arrowroot biscuit. There's good balance between acidity, sweetness and a dry finish.

Jane Faulkner