

 Seasonal cook


Photo: Steven Stewart

**GRILLED SCALLOPS WITH PARMESAN FENNEL**

2 small to medium fennel bulbs  
 Juice of 1 lemon  
 1 tbsp white wine vinegar  
 2-3 knobs salted butter  
 150g parmesan, grated  
 Salt and fine white pepper  
 18 large scallops, cleaned  
 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
 100ml pouring (single or pure) cream  
 2 tbsp finely sliced chives

Trim fennel bulbs removing tougher outside leaves and most of the base. Cut into 16 slices and place in a pot with plenty of water, lemon juice and vinegar. Bring to the boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 10-12 minutes until tender. Remove slices from water. Pat dry and place them in a baking dish. Drop butter in dish around fennel. Top with 100g grated parmesan. Season a little with salt and white pepper. Bake in a preheated 200C oven for 5-8 minutes until golden. Meanwhile, sprinkle scallops with a little salt. Heat olive oil in a large skillet and, just when oil begins to smoke, sear scallops for 1 minute on each side, depending how thick they are. Once well browned, remove pan from heat and set aside. Whip cream to form soft peaks. Place whipped cream in a saucepan on medium heat and whisk in remaining parmesan until it melts and starts to bubble. Place fennel and scallops on plates, spooning cream sauce over the top. Finish with chives.

**Serves 6 as a first course (pictured)**  
**Wine** Traminer or pouilly-fume.

**RICE WITH PARMESAN, PROSCIUTTO AND MOZZARELLA**

Salt and cracked black pepper  
 400g Italian rice such as carnaroli, arborio or viadone nano  
 60g unsalted butter  
 300g fresh mozzarella balls  
 120g parmesan, grated  
 6 rashers prosciutto, cut into thin strips  
 3 tbsp coarsely chopped parsley

In a large saucepan, bring to the boil 4 litres of water with 1 tsp of salt. Add rice, stir and simmer for about 20 minutes, depending on the rice. It should be al dente but not chalky. Meanwhile, cut butter into thin slices. Drain mozzarella and tear into some small pieces. Drain rice when it is cooked and transfer into a large, warm serving bowl. Stir in the mozzarella pieces and parmesan immediately, while the rice is still hot, so the cheeses melt evenly. Stir in butter, prosciutto and parsley. Adjust salt to taste and stir in some cracked pepper. Serve immediately while hot.

**Serves 6 as a first course**  
**Wine** Sangiovese or dolceito.

 Full bottle

**QUAFFING**

**RUNNING WITH BULLS**  
**TEMPRANILLO BAROSSA**  
 2011, \$19



If the idea of running with the bulls in the Spanish village of Pamplona is utterly ridiculous, why not drink this fabulous tempranillo instead? Running With Bulls is a great Aussie tempranillo and this vintage is the best to date. I love its fragrance and body, starting with red liquorice, spice and florals. While it's quite savoury, it has a core of juicy, fresh fruit. Ripe tannins provide more oomph and good acidity to cut through a rich braise of beef and creamy mash.

**TRYING**

**STANTON & KILLEEN**  
**CLASSIC MUSCAT, \$30**



A glass of this classic muscat, with an average age of 12 years, is what's needed after dinner with coffee, in place of dessert. It's dark and enticing in the glass, with real depth, plenty of molasses, toffee, raisin and dried-fig notes. There's a pretty floral lift, too. Rich and luscious on the palate, this Rutherglen fortified is lip-smackingly good. These wines have already been aged so, with the exception of vintage port, don't put them away in a cellar. Once the bottle has been opened, it will last a couple of months.

**CELLARING**

**BEST'S GREAT WESTERN**  
**THOMSON FAMILY SHIRAZ**  
 2010, \$180



It's a privilege to drink this wine, as it's from seriously old vines. Pouring it fills me with a sense of history. It's a still-brooding, fuller-bodied shiraz. The 2010 is dark, earthy, richly flavoured and concentrated, yet fragrant with spice nuances, cedary oak and velvety, ripe, round tannins. A finely tuned, structured wine that will easily age for 20 years or more. To drink it this young, pair it with char-grilled scotch fillet and horseradish.

**Jane Faulkner**

# Whey to go

Parmigiano-reggiano is one of northern Italy's finest contributions to the culinary world, writes STEVE MANFREDI.

Two recent earthquakes near the city of Modena, in northern Italy's Emilia-Romagna region, left 24 people dead and 15,000 homeless. The shocks devastated many priceless historic buildings.

As if that was not catastrophic enough, footage was beamed around the world of 20-metre-high shelves full of parmigiano-reggiano (parmesan) wheels that had toppled like dominoes.

Not every facility was affected. The damage was indiscriminate, but by the time the dust settled an estimated 300,000 wheels had fallen. About half – representing 5 per cent of annual

production – were damaged. Parmesan is currency in this community. It was heartening to see footage of rescued wedges of cheese being sold at a 40 per cent discount in the heart of Modena. Standing in line was a young woman who said that she was buying parmesan not just because the price was good, but also "to stand in solidarity with my people".

Everyone in the area depends on parmesan. It constitutes an entire agrarian system that has given the world a truly precious product.

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