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sunday

HERALD SUN MAGAZINE

DONNA HAY...
READY AND
GRILLING

INTRODUCING
BETH DITTO,
POP'S NEXT
BIG THING

To
Kerr
with love

WHY MIRANDA IS NO
LONGER AUSTRALIA'S
BEST-KEPT SECRET

WIN ONE OF FOUR MITSUBISHI COLT CABRIOLETS IN TIME FOR SUMMER!

APPETITE

Edited by Jane Hutchinson



For the perfect poached egg, crack it into a cup lined with plastic wrap. Twist the plastic to enclose, lower into simmering water and hold for 30 seconds. Then gently release the egg.

You'll find more great kitchen tips at www.taste.com.au.



THIRSTY WORK

MATT SKINNER

It's not PC to admit it, but I love flying. Working for an organisation with offices on either side of the equator, flying has become an integral part of my job.

Still, much as I enjoy climbing aboard a jumbo, the effect of altitude on our senses is dramatic. Two things cause this: the relatively low humidity of the cabin affects our ability to smell, made worse by the low cabin pressure, which acts as an anaesthetic on our taste buds. As a result, many wines will seem less fruity, more acidic and higher in tannin at 30,000 feet. Qantas has a team of experts who sniff, swirl and slurp their way through hundreds of wines to dig out those that will perform best in the air. Here are two of them:

Wirra Wirra Scrubby Rise Shiraz Cabernet Petit Verdot 2006 (\$16.50) is a delicious drink-now red. Expect to find a compact nose of sweet dark plums, violets and spice. In the mouth, it's soft, full and all about fruit, with little oak influence and a wash of fine drying tannins to finish.

From Clare Valley, **Taylor's St Andrews Riesling 2002 (\$37.95)** is a textbook example of aged Aussie riesling. It's all here, from classic smells of lime marmalade, mandarin, fresh-cut flowers and spice, through to an intense yet beautifully balanced mouthful of wine.

Matt Skinner is the author of *The Juice 2008* (Hardie Grant, \$19.95). Visit www.mattskinner.net.



BAR NONE

The Aviary, 271 Victoria St, Abbotsford. Call (03) 9428 7727. Open from Tuesday to Sunday.

The look: Part Spanish church, part post-modern supper club, The Aviary has a big bluestone building to play with. Bird-cage lamps, postage stamp wallpaper and Chesterfield wingback chairs are just some of the interior highlights. The plan is to expand the coop upstairs for summer. **To drink:** A mainly Australian wine list supplemented by European varietals, plus a reasonable by-the-glass selection. While it's tempting to go the sangria (\$9), the cocktail menu warrants a squiz; try the Ginger Finch Daiquiri, with rum, lime, kiwi fruit and ginger liqueur (\$16) or the Butcher Bird, with Drambuie, scotch, blackberries and mint (\$16). **To eat:** Tapas-themed share plates such as Galician octopus (\$11) and wagyu carpaccio (\$12) will satisfy bird-like appetites. More ravenous types can get stuck into paella (\$24). **Best for:** Wetting the whistle before a Victoria Street feast.

By the www.DeckOfSecrets.com team.

GLUTTON

ROYAL MAIL HOTEL, Parker St, Dunkeld. Call (03) 5577 2241

The buzz about the Royal Mail Hotel has been building. We'd heard about the 8000-plus bottle wine cellar, but when news emerged that young gun chef Dan Hunter, fresh from his reign as head chef of Spain's revered Mugaritz restaurant in San Sebastian, was taking over the kitchen, the 158-year-old pub became a hot destination. Set at the base of the Grampians, it looks impressive – the modern façade (from a 1997 renovation) standing out against Mt Sturgeon. Inside, the dining room is all white linen, blonde wood and neutral tones, with mesmerising mountain views. The menu seems unassuming by comparison, but the spartan descriptions belie the pyrotechnics on the plate, as Hunter applies innovative techniques honed at Mugaritz to the best local produce – much of it from the hotel's kitchen gardens. Root vegetables (\$24) are dehydrated then transformed into gleaming spheres of concentrated flavour by rehydration in a bone marrow glaze, while truffle oil is transmuted into an aromatic 'sand' to accompany roasted bass grouper (\$42). The eight-course degustation menu (\$125) begins with an earthy king brown mushroom, topped with an emulsified egg yolk that oozes over a bed of crushed potato, and ends with a quivering fez of burnt orange crème. In between is a parade of tastes and textures that challenges and delights: refreshingly sweet aloe vera gel with pert, pan-fried scallops, a shot of intensely sweet pear consommé served alongside a bittersweet pre-dessert of caramelised witlof. This is the stuff that has had serious foodies making the 3.5-hour trek to Dunkeld. Now the rest of us are starting to catch on.

Three of a find... anchovies



Agostino Recca Fillets of Anchovies in Pure Olive Oil, \$7.50 (56g). This imported Italian variety has a nice balance of olive oil and salt flavours. And because they're packed in a jar, it's easy to use just a couple now and save the rest for later. Stockists: Woolworths and independent supermarkets.



Russino Fillets of Anchovies in Olive Oil, \$4.99 (160g). This imported Italian variety has a nice balance of olive oil and salt flavours. And because they're packed in a jar, it's easy to use just a couple now and save the rest for later. Stockists: Woolworths and independent supermarkets.



Always Fresh Flat Fillet Anchovies in Extra Virgin Olive Oil, \$2.48 (45g). Caught in the cold Atlantic waters off the coast of Spain, these have a relatively mild flavour that won't prove overpowering. The ring-pull tin ensures limited breakage of the full fillet. Available from supermarkets.

STILL LIFE PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN DENING