

First up



Give your Christmas menu a great start with one of Luca Villari's elegant entrées

Photographs by **Kieran Scott**

festive entrées .



Zaatar Prawns, Kumara, Lemon & Asparagus Salad, see recipe over the page.



Zaaatar prawns, kumara, lemon & asparagus salad

Ready in 45 minutes, plus marinating time
Serves 4

- 12 asparagus, ends snapped off, then sliced on an angle
- 500g kumara, peeled and diced
- 125ml extra virgin olive oil, plus 40ml to cook prawns
- 12–16 large raw king prawns, heads removed, peeled and cleaned
- 3 Tbsp zaaatar spice blend (see Cook's Tip)
- Zest and juice 1 lemon
- 10 mint leaves
- 10 basil leaves
- 4 small shallots, cut in half then finely sliced
- 80g shaved parmesan (or grana padano)
- 20 baby spinach leaves, washed
- 1 red chilli, deseeded and sliced on an angle
- Dressing (mix together)**
- 40ml red wine vinegar
- 120ml extra virgin olive oil

- 1 Preheat oven to 200°C. Blanch asparagus in boiling water, refresh in iced water, then drain.
- 2 Toss kumara in 125ml extra virgin olive oil, season with salt and pepper, then roast in the oven for 8–10 minutes or until tender. Set aside.

- 3 Marinate prawns in zaaatar blend for 30 minutes. Heat remaining oil in a frying pan, season the prawns, then cook in batches for 10 seconds on each side. Remove from pan, drizzle with lemon juice, sprinkle with lemon zest and set aside.
- 4 Combine kumara, mint, basil, shallots, asparagus and parmesan and season to taste. Place salad in the centre of a plate and arrange prawns around the outside.
- 5 Toss baby spinach leaves with sliced chilli and drizzle with just enough dressing to combine the leaves. Place on top of the salad. Drizzle more dressing on the prawns and serve.

COOK'S TIP

I used Sami's Kitchen Zaaatar blend, but you also could mix your own. Toast 2 Tbsp sesame seeds in a small pan over low heat until golden in colour. Remove from heat, cool, then stir in 1 Tbsp dried thyme, 1 Tbsp dried oregano, 1 tsp salt and 2 Tbsp ground sumac. This will keep for months in an airtight container.

Salmon & beetroot with horseradish mascarpone

Ready in 45 minutes **Serves** 4

- 40g fresh grated horseradish (or use horseradish paste)
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp white wine vinegar
- 2 Tbsp chopped chives
- 2 Tbsp chopped dill
- 150ml mascarpone (or whipped cream)
- 4 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 600g baby beetroots, topped and tailed and cooked in salted water until tender (about 25 minutes), refreshed, then peeled and halved
- 300g good-quality hot-smoked salmon, cut into 3cm chunks, at room temperature
- 1 bunch micro watercress leaves

- 4 spring onions, sliced on an angle
- 1 bunch snow pea shoots, tips only
- Dressing (mix together)**
- 3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- Red pepper sauce**
- 2 red peppers, deseeded and chopped
- 2 Tbsp caster sugar
- 2 Tbsp white wine vinegar
- 4 Tbsp water
- ½ red chilli, deseeded and chopped

- 1 Mix horseradish with the lemon juice, vinegar, chives, dill and a pinch of salt and pepper, then fold into the mascarpone to combine. Chill.

- 2 Heat extra virgin olive oil in a heavy-based saucepan. Toss in the beetroot and cook until lightly coloured on all sides. Season, then set aside.
- 3 To make the red pepper sauce, put all ingredients in a stainless steel pot and bring to the boil. Simmer for 10 minutes, then transfer to a blender and purée thoroughly.
- 4 To serve, drizzle pepper sauce around a serving bowl. Arrange beetroot and salmon in the bowl, then garnish with micro cress, spring onions and snow pea shoots. Drizzle with dressing. Place a dollop of horseradish mascarpone in the centre.

Used throughout: Cutlery from Urban Loft. Green Christmas baubles and foliage from Milly's Kitchen Shop. Page 1XX: Tree candles from Acland Holdings. Tealight holders from Republic. Page 2XX: Plate from Urban Loft. Tumbler from Milly's Kitchen Shop. Page 4XX: Plate from Stevens. Glasses from Republic. Page 5XX: Platter from Urban Loft. Page 6XX: Green bowl from Milly's Kitchen Shop. Beads from Acland Holdings. Page 8XX: Plate from Urban Loft. Page 9XX: Platter and stars from Urban Loft. All else, privately owned. See Where to Buy, page 1XX.

Styling by Meng Koach





Two-way tuna with herb salad

Ready in 40 minutes Serves 4

Tuna carpaccio

200g tuna loin
2 fennel bulbs, shaved
3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 Tbsp lemon juice

Tuna tartare

200g tuna, cut into small cubes
80g cucumber, peeled and diced
2 Tbsp chopped chives
3 Tbsp sesame oil
120g pequinillo peppers, chopped (or charred red pepper, peeled then diced)
1 Tbsp salmon roe (optional)

Herb salad

½ cup peeled and shredded daikon (Japanese radish)
½ cup shredded cucumber
6 mint leaves, shredded
10 coriander leaves, shredded

Dressing (makes 250ml)

50ml mirin
50ml soy sauce
100ml olive oil
50ml rice wine vinegar

1 To make the carpaccio, cut the tuna into 5mm thick slices. Put plastic food wrap on the bench and lay each slice of tuna on top. Cover with more plastic wrap, then gently flatten with a meat tenderiser to form thin strips. Transfer tuna to a plate and refrigerate for 20 minutes. Season fennel with salt and pepper and drizzle with olive oil and lemon juice.

2 To make the tartare, mix together the tuna, cucumber, chives and sesame oil and refrigerate for 10 minutes.

3 Mix together the herb salad ingredients and set aside. Whisk together all the dressing ingredients.

4 To assemble the dish, transfer the fennel to a serving platter. Gently lay the tuna strips on top. Dress the herb salad with 2 Tbsp dressing (remaining dressing will keep in fridge for up to 3 weeks) and arrange on the carpaccio. Place tuna tartare on platter (in Asian spoons if you wish) and top with chopped peppers. Garnish with salmon roe, if using. Drizzle a little dressing on the carpaccio and serve.



Spiced Duck & Gold Beetroot with Citrus Salad, see recipe over the page.



Spiced duck & gold beetroot with citrus salad

Ready in 1 hour Serves 4

3 medium-size gold beetroot
200ml orange juice
3 Tbsp honey

2 tsp pickled ginger (from Asian food stores)
4 Tbsp rice wine vinegar
3 large duck breasts (about 250g each), trimmed then scored on skin with a sharp knife
2 tsp Chinese five spice
1 Tbsp olive oil
1 head frisee lettuce, leaves picked and washed (or use rocket or watercress)

Citrus salad

4 small mandarins, peeled and segmented (if unavailable use drained canned mandarins or 2 fresh oranges)
3 spring onions, thinly sliced on an angle
2 celery sticks, thinly sliced on an angle
2 Tbsp toasted shaved almonds

Dressing (makes around 200ml)

125ml canola oil
50ml Dijon mustard
Juice ½ lemon
1 tsp sugar
1 tsp sesame oil
¼ tsp chilli flakes

1 Cook beetroot in salted water until tender, then refresh in cold water. Peel, then slice thinly on a mandoline or with a sharp knife. Set aside.

2 Heat orange juice, honey, ginger and rice wine vinegar and reduce until glossy (6–7 minutes). Add beetroot slices, simmer for 1 minute, then remove from heat and cool. Remove beetroot, reserving liquid.
3 Sprinkle duck on the flesh side with five spice and season with salt and pepper. Heat oil in a frying pan on medium heat, then cook duck skin side down (as it cooks it will render its own fat – this can be saved to use for confit, and it's great instead of oil for roasting potatoes). Cook duck on low heat for 8–10 minutes, then drain excess fat, increase heat and cook for 2–3 minutes more. Turn breasts over, cook for a further 4 minutes, then remove from heat and rest meat in a warm place for 6–8 minutes.
4 Mix together the citrus salad ingredients and whisk dressing ingredients together with salt and pepper to taste.
5 To serve, carve 10 slices from each duck breast. Arrange 4 beetroot slices in centre of each serving plate and drizzle with the reserved orange and honey glaze. Place sliced duck to one side of beetroot. Put some citrus salad on top of duck. Dress lettuce leaves with 2–3 Tbsp dressing and add to each plate. (Use remaining dressing on salads; it keeps for 3 weeks in fridge.)

Crumbed mozzarella with smoked mushrooms

Ready in 1 hour Serves 4

250ml extra virgin olive oil
300g button mushrooms, cut into quarters
300g oyster mushrooms, cut in half
300g shiitake mushrooms, cut in half
50g English breakfast tea leaves
3 sprigs thyme
3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
50ml balsamic vinegar
Few threads of saffron (2 pinches)
100g strong flour, plus extra for dusting mozzarella
2 x 200g mozzarella logs, cut into 8mm slices
About 200g panko crumbs
Oil, for deep-frying

100g rocket leaves
8 slices jamon (or prosciutto)

1 Heat 100ml extra virgin olive oil in a large pan. Toss in the mushrooms and cook on low heat for 10 minutes or until cooked. Drain and set aside.
2 Put tea leaves in some tinfoil, scrunching the foil up around the tea to create an open-topped 'dish', then place in the bottom of a large pan with a lid. Put a small wire rack in the pan over the tea and lay more foil on the rack. Place the cooked mushrooms on the foil-lined rack. Turn the heat up so the tea begins to smoke. Cover pan with the lid, lower heat and smoke the

mushrooms for 8 minutes. Leaving the lid on, rest mushrooms for 5 minutes, then remove from pan.
3 Heat remaining oil, then remove from heat and add the thyme sprigs. Let cool for 5 minutes, then add garlic and balsamic. Pour flavoured oil over the cooled mushrooms and set aside.
4 Infuse the saffron with 12 Tbsp hot salted water, then gradually whisk in the flour and enough water to form a thick batter.
5 Dip mozzarella slices in a little flour, shake off excess, dip in batter, then breadcrumbs. Deep-fry in hot oil (it will be hot enough when a cube of bread sizzles and turns golden in seconds) until golden in colour, about 3–4 minutes. Drain.
6 Scatter rocket around serving plates. Arrange mushrooms on top, with slices of ham or prosciutto. Put mozzarella in the centre and drizzle with a little olive oil and balsamic from the mushrooms.

Set the tone for an elegant Christmas gathering with a beautifully presented entrée





Mushroom ravioli with broad bean & ricotta fresca

Ready in 45 minutes, plus resting time for dough **Serves** 4

You could use ready-made fresh lasagne for the ravioli; use a rolling pin to thin it out if necessary, then fill and cut as per recipe.

500g strong flour (00 Italian flour)
 5 large free-range eggs
 1 Tbsp ground black pepper
Mushroom filling
 3 Tbsp olive oil
 2 Tbsp butter
 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
 1 tsp chopped red chilli
 400g mixed mushrooms (such as wood ear, porcini, shiitake), sliced
 3 Tbsp chopped chives

3 Tbsp chopped thyme leaves
 4 Tbsp grated parmesan cheese
 1 Tbsp truffle oil (optional)
Cream sauce
 300ml chicken stock
 300ml cream
 3 sprigs thyme
 Zest 1 lemon
 16 cloves garlic
 200g frozen broad beans, cooked in salted boiling water for 10 seconds, refreshed in cold water, then skinned
To serve
 160ml fresh ricotta
 10 basil leaves, shredded

1 Make a well in the centre of the flour. Add eggs, break them up with a fork, then use the fork to start mixing in the flour. Add a pinch of salt and the pepper. As the dough begins to come together, knead it for 4–5 minutes or until smooth. If it looks too dry, add another egg yolk; if it is too wet, add more flour. Wrap dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 45 minutes.

2 While dough is resting, make the filling. Heat oil and butter in a large frying pan. Add sliced garlic, toss in the chilli and cook for 1 minute on low. Add mushrooms, cook on medium heat for 6–8 minutes or until liquid has evaporated. Remove from heat, toss in chives, thyme, parmesan and truffle oil, if using, and season to taste.

3 Remove dough from fridge and divide into 4 balls. Flatten balls slightly then roll one at a time through the thickest setting of a pasta maker 3–4 times. Repeat, dusting with flour if needed, then run through the settings until sheets are 1.5mm thick. Cover sheets with a damp cloth when not rolling.

4 Make 4 ravioli at a time. The pasta sheets will be around 10cm wide. Lay a pasta sheet on a floured surface. Place heaped tablespoons of filling at 5cm intervals along the pasta sheet. Brush with water around the edges and between each spoonful of filling, then lay another pasta sheet on top. Use your thumb to press the pasta sheets together – work along one side first, then between the mounds of filling, then along the other side, making sure there are no air pockets and that ravioli are tightly sealed. Trim with a pasta cutter into equal-sized squares. Dust with semolina if not cooking straightaway.

5 Put chicken stock, cream, thyme sprigs, lemon zest and garlic cloves in a pot. Bring to the boil, then simmer 10 minutes. Remove garlic, transfer cloves to a blender and whiz to make a smooth purée. Reduce cream sauce by half, then turn off the heat, toss in the broad beans and remove the thyme sprigs. Season sauce with salt.

6 Blanch ravioli in boiling salted water for 3–4 minutes or until they float to the top and are firm. Gently drain.

7 Arrange garlic purée in the centre of each serving dish and top with ravioli. Drizzle with cream sauce and broad beans, sprinkle with crumbled ricotta and garnish with sliced basil. 🍴