FOOD OF THE SOUTHERN FORESTS

Southern forests chef Sophie Zalokar took it upon herself to share the stories of this West Australian food destination and discovered a plethora of new and exciting recipes along the way.

Having raised a family and built up a hospitality business on a smallholding in Pemberton with my husband Chris, I came to know many of the local growers and early migrant families. We also found that lots of people who lived both in and out of the region had no idea the Southern Forests produced such a diverse range of beautiful food, so a book seemed imperative and timely, giving the growing support for local produce and regional food tourism.

The book will inspire West Australians to seek out culinary experiences in their own state, discovering the Southern Forests in a way they’ve not considered before: from the sparkling taste of a new season apple in the orchard where it was grown, to the intoxicating aroma of a fresh truffle just out of the ground, and the caramelised smoky flavour of roasted chestnuts prepared by a fourth-generation Italian-Australian farmer.

After cooking from and reading through the pages of this beautifully photographed book I’m sure you’ll agree this region is unique and well worth seeking out.

FOOD OF THE SOUTHERN FORESTS

SNAPPER WITH TOASTED QUINOA, MARJORAM, BORAGE & BUTTERED SORREL

Serves 4
1 cup red quinoa
2 cups water
1 tsp salt
1 med shallot, finely chopped
½ cup dry white wine
¼ cup apple cider vinegar
280g unsalted cultured butter
Salt flakes
Freshly cracked black pepper
4 x 180-200g thick snapper fillets
1 sm handful sorrel leaves, ribs removed and leaves torn
1 tbsp marjoram leaves & flowers
8-10 borage flowers

SIMMER the quinoa in the water with the salt for 20 minutes until tender. Drain well and spread out thinly on a baking tray.
COOK the shallot in the wine and vinegar until nearly three-quarters reduced. Strain through a fine sieve, pressing to extract as much of the wine and vinegar reduction as possible. Return the reduction to the shallot and discard the shallot.
TOAST 250g of the cultured butter into the reduction on a low heat until creamy and emulsified. Season to taste and reserve in a warm place.
DIVIDE the snapper fillets before panfrying in the remaining 35g butter for 3 to 4 minutes per side, depending on the thickness of the fish.
GARNISH with the marjoram leaves and flowers and borage flowers.

ROASTED CHERRY TOMATOES, SMOKED PAPRIKA, ASHED GOATS’ CHEESE ON GRILLED SOURDOUGH BREAD

Serves 4
2 punnets large red and yellow grape or cherry tomatoes
Extra virgin olive oil
1 tsp smoked paprika
150g fresh ashed goats’ cheese
2 tbsp oregano leaves, to garnish
250g unsalted cultured butter
Salt flakes
1 tsp smoked paprika
Extra virgin olive oil
2 punnets large red and yellow grape or cherry tomatoes
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1 tsp salt
1 med shallot, finely chopped
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Salt flakes
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GARNISH with the marjoram leaves and flowers and borage flowers.
AVOCADO WITH LIME, PICKLED GINGER, CINNAMON, TOASTED PINE NUTS & PURPLE BASIL

Serves 4, entree size
2 ripe Hass avocados
1 tbsp Japanese-style pickled ginger, finely sliced
1/4 cup toasted pine nuts
1 lime, rind and pit removed, finely diced
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil or avocado oil (plus extra)
1 tsp ground cinnamon (plus extra)
Salt flakes
Freshly cracked black pepper
½ cup purple basil leaves

HALVE the avocados, remove the seeds and, using a large spoon, scoop the flesh out of the skin in one motion so the avocado half is intact.
CUT a sliver of avocado from the curved side to make a flat surface so the avocado sits flat on the plate.
FINELY DICE the avocado slivers and place in the cavity where the seed was.
COMBINE the pickled ginger, pine nuts, lime, extra virgin olive oil and ground cinnamon with a little seasoning and divide evenly between the four avocado halves.
GARNISH with the purple basil leaves, drizzle over a little more oil and sprinkle a pinch of ground cinnamon on each filled avocado before serving.

CHERRY, ALMOND & KIRSCH CLAFOUTIS

Serves 6
3 free range eggs
5 free range egg yolks
350ml cream
150g caster sugar
100g almond meal
15g rice flour
1 tbsp melted butter
15 fresh cherries, destalked, pitted and halved, plus ten whole cherries
1 tbsp kirsch (optional)
Icing sugar
Bannister Downs whipping cream

PREHEAT oven to 180°C.
BEAT the eggs, yolks, cream and sugar together in a bowl, whisk in almond meal and rice flour until well combined. Place in jug, cover and refrigerate for an hour.
BRUSH the bottom of a 20cm shallow, heavy-based baking dish with melted butter. Evenly place in the halved cherries and then pour over the clafoutis batter.
BAKE 30 minutes until the middle is set. Drizzle over the kirsch and leave to cool slightly before dusting with icing sugar.
SERVE garnished with whole cherries and whipping cream.

BAGNA CÀUDA WITH SPRING VEGETABLES

Serves 6
10-12 garlic cloves, peeled
Full cream milk
20 sml canned anchovy fillets in oil, drained
300g unsalted butter, softened
200ml extra virgin olive oil
100ml pouring cream

PLACE the garlic cloves into a small saucepan and cover with milk.
SIMMER until the garlic is soft and the milk has reduced to a small creamy amount.
PUREE the garlic and anchovies into the reduced milk with a stick blender until smooth.
WHISK the butter and olive oil into the puree, occasionally warming over a low heat while whisking to amalgamate. Add the cream, gently warm and then pour into a pre-heated ceramic dish.
SERVE on a platter surrounded by fresh seasonal vegetables (spring onions, baby carrots, celery hearts, cos lettuce hearts, wild, boiled globe artichokes, fennel, asparagus).