

The Grocer's Seasonal Newsletter

Autumn 2006

New Life, New Trends

Spring is usually the season we associate with new life but we have two reasons for contemplating new life this autumn. Firstly Easter is coming up – one of the most widely celebrated new beginnings both from Christian and Pagan perspectives (although the Pagans were actually celebrating spring, which is obviously less relevant to those of us living down under!).

Secondly, Andrew and I have welcomed our first child into our family. James Miller was born on 8 February and we're both absolutely thrilled. Time has sped up since our little boy arrived, but with the help of our parents (who travelled a long way to be here) we managed to keep things going at The Grocer and have even enjoyed a few good meals. Sadly our support crew have returned home so there's been an increase in the consumption of baked beans on toast for dinner recently! There's a trend towards involving kids in the kitchen and I'm sure I'll share with you what I learn about cooking for little palates and how to get children excited about real food.

Another trend we've seen in cooking over the past few years is the increase in popularity of Middle Eastern and North African cuisines. The exotic and fiery flavours of these cuisines are well suited to our hot climate, however many home cooks would like to know a little more about using the spice mixes and pastes that are available. We hope our article overleaf and one page guide (available from the showroom) on Middle Eastern ingredients will help you to explore some new ways of cooking.

We're sorry to say that we won't be able to host a tasting day this season. Instead, we're going to enjoy the next few months with our gorgeous baby while he's still so tiny and take some time to adjust to our new responsibilities as parents. But we're already planning a big tasting day in the winter – stay tuned for the details. In the meantime, enjoy our ideas for making the most of the autumnal produce and Easter celebrations.

Tastefully Yours
Louise Miller
louise@thegrocer.com.au

Winter Tasting at the Showroom

Look out for the winter newsletter in July where we'll be announcing the next tasting day at our showroom. We'll have a large range of winter delights cooked up for you to enjoy and also hope to have a special guest for you to meet.

In the meantime we have many products available for tasting on Saturday mornings – but before you rush in, please make a note of our new opening hours.

New Opening Hours on Saturday

Over the past 12 months we've had a few requests to open a little earlier on Saturdays. We've agreed that's a great idea and since March we've been doing just that. However, we'll be closing a little earlier too.

New Saturday Opening Hours
9am – 12 noon

Farmhouse Cheeses of Kangaroo Island Call it a Day

We're very sad to report that the founders of Farmhouse Cheeses of Kangaroo Island, Mos and Liz Howard, have decided to call it a day after 14 years of cheese making on this pristine island off the South Australian coast. Unfortunately the ongoing drought has made it a real battle to keep up enough milk supply to continue making the hand made brie and camembert cheeses we've enjoyed so much. Mos and Liz, however, are looking on the bright side and are planning to spend more time with their family and travelling.

The good news is that Sheree Dunford of Udder Delights Cheeses in the Adelaide Hills town Lobethal has agreed to continue making the award winning cows milk cheeses to Mos's exact recipe. See below for information about the Udder Delights goat cheeses we'll be stocking at The Grocer.

Meddling in the Middle East

We've recently heard lamentations from people who are tired of always cooking the same type of food, whether it's during the week for family or on special occasions with friends. It's also increasingly difficult to find inspiration among the plethora of Australian food magazines published each month. We see a lot of repetition in the most popular magazines with Asian or Mediterranean cuisines receiving all the focus (one month we found similar recipes for chickpea salad in four separate magazines).

One area starting to arouse the curiosity of food journalists, restauranteurs and home cooks alike is Middle Eastern cuisine. However, for most of us this represents unfamiliar territory. In fact a short survey uncovered that many people are a bit unsure about which countries make up the Middle East!

Gastronomically, the countries which seem to have the most influence on what we know as Middle Eastern cuisine are Turkey, Syria and Lebanon – all of which have their own unique style of cooking and preference for ingredients.

Closely linked to the Middle East (both in cooking style and geographically) is the food of North Africa. Most notably, the food of the Maghreb (a region in Northwest Africa made up of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria) has captured the imagination of many adventurous cooks. This region was, at one time or another, inhabited by African, Arab, Berber, Ottoman, French, Italian and Spanish peoples with the influence of each culture evident in the recipes and ingredients. You could say the food of North Africa is the original 'fusion food'.

There are many reasons to include a few Middle Eastern recipes in your repertoire. Many dishes are one pot meals where meat, vegetables and pulses are slowly cooked together to enable the complex blend of spices to infuse the whole dish. These spicy and fragrant slow cooked dishes take little time to prepare and make the most of cheaper cuts of meat (often lamb). In addition, most Middle Eastern meals are very healthy, containing little saturated fat and lots of pulses. There's also a wide variety of interesting vegetable only dishes.

Many Middle Eastern and North African recipes are centuries old with complex herb and spice blends essential to their success. But don't feel overwhelmed by the need to stick to the traditional methods of cooking. You can still enjoy the flavours and influences of these rich cuisines without having to be intimate with the techniques and ingredients. For example, many unique spice mixes are available pre-prepared and these can simply be added to dishes you already cook – such as adding ras el hanout to pumpkin soup.

We stock and distribute a number of basic ingredients for North African and Middle Eastern cooking. You may already be familiar with things like preserved lemons, sumac, brik pastry, couscous, falafel, pomegranate molasses and orange blossom water. If not, or if you'd simply like more ideas on using these ingredients, pick up a copy of our one page guide at the showroom or download it from our website www.thegrocer.com.au.

For more information about Middle Eastern or North African cuisine refer to these cookbooks: The Momo Cookbook, Mourad Mazouz; Saha, Greg and Lucy Malouf; or this website www.paula-wolfert.com.

Our Favourite Websites

In our search for new ingredients, new recipes or new ways of cooking old favourites, we've turned to the internet. Here are just some of our favourite destinations. Feel free to let us know of any you've come across.

www.practicallyedible.com – an American site that refers to itself as the world's largest food encyclopaedia. We couldn't find a few ingredients we were looking for, but had fun reading the food myths and Trivia of the Day.

www.cuisine.co.nz – just as good as the magazine and a great resource for recipes and foods in season.

www.regionalfood.com.au – also a great magazine, this site has a comprehensive list of regional markets in each state. To find those in WA, click on 'Advanced Search'.

www.goancuisine.com.au – a great source of new ideas for using these popular WA made Goan inspired products.

New Outlets

The following retail outlets have just started stocking products from The Grocer:

- Black Duck Gourmet Pantry, 34 Peels Place, Albany.
- Bridgetown Mini Mart, 39 Hampton St, Bridgetown.
- Dewsons Beaumaris, Constellation Drive, Ocean Reef.
- The Halls Creek Store, Gt Northern Hwy, Halls Creek.
- Moka Pantry, Shop 14 Dolphin Quay, 4 Zephyr Mews, Mandurah.
- Supa Valu, Edgewater Shopping Centre, Edgewater Drive, Edgewater.
- Balcatta Growers Fresh, 652 Karrinyup Rd, Balcatta.
- Taste of Balingup, 1/63 South West Hwy, Balingup.

New Products on our Shelves

Malouf's Spice Mezza

No one represents modern Middle Eastern cooking in Australia better than Greg Malouf. Greg is a Melbourne based chef whose Lebanese background and knowledge of Middle Eastern and North African cuisine have made him a widely respected and influential chef.

His spice range was very popular at The Grocer a number of years ago and we're thrilled that it is once again available along with a number of new products.

Here's a few tips for using each of the products he produces.

For more great recipe ideas, visit Greg's website www.gregmalouf.com

Product	Type	Uses
Chermoula There are many versions of this traditional fragrant North African paste but the basic recipe always contains a blend of coriander, parsley, lemon juice, olive oil, garlic and salt and pepper.	Wet paste	Marinade for red meat or poultry. Add to stews, tagines, soups. Baste roasts or bbq meats.
Harissa A fiery Tunisian paste, made predominantly from red-hot chillies and used as an accompaniment to a wide variety of foods, in much the same way as the Italians use pesto, the Asians chilli sauce and the Indians their lime pickles. Also available a green harissa made from milder green chillies.	Wet paste	Add to stews, soups or sauces. Also great with risotto, pasta or in salad dressings. As accompaniment to couscous, pilaf, grills. Use in sandwiches or burgers.
Baharat Baharat simply means 'spice' in Arabic, so like ras el hanout there are many different blends available containing a wide variety of different spices.	Dry spice mix	Perfect for lamb (chops, braises or roasts). Add to soups, tomato dishes or fish stews. Dust seafood before barbequing.
Ras el Hanout Meaning 'top of the shop' or 'house blend', ras el hanout is a Moroccan spice mix that can be made with as many as 100 ingredients. The range has two varieties – golden (the hotter version) and standard (more aromatic).	Dry spice mix	Mix with flour to dust meats or poultry (including pork) before cooking. Add to pulse or rice dishes for spicy flavour – also good addition to couscous. Makes great curried egg mix.
Egyptian Dukkah Reputed to have been used to disguise rancid oil in ancient Egypt, this nut and spice blend was introduced to Australia many years ago by Russell Jeavons, a well known chef in South Australia.	Dry mix including nuts	As a dip for bread and olive oil. Mix with flour and use to crumb fish or chicken. Use in Emma's recipe below.
Jordanian Za'atar A mix of finely ground thyme, sumac and sesame seeds.	Dry spice and herb mix	Sprinkle on salads. Season roast meats. Add to robust fish before grilling. Roll cheese such as fetta or labne in za'atar.

Udder Delights

Another great product has returned to The Grocer this month. You may remember the wonderful range of goat cheeses from South Australian cheese maker Udder Delights.

Along with the goat camembert and a wonderful aged ashed cheese called Oscar, Udder Delights will be producing a cows milk brie round and smaller camembert to the same recipe as those made by Farmhouse Cheeses of Kangaroo Island.

We'll have these cheeses open for tasting each Saturday in the showroom.

Jane Brook Verjuice

We recently tried and fell in love with the Jane Brook Winery chardonnay verjuice. It has a light fresh taste, reminiscent of the verjuice made for us a few years ago in Frankland River.

It's now available at The Grocer and many of our retail partners in an elegant 500mL bottle. Look out for the pink version coming next vintage!

Horizon Smoked Salt

These Australian lake salt flakes have the most intense

smoked flavour. It can add an amazing element to any roast or even bbq'd seafood dish.

Spice Magazine

A number of new food magazines have come on to the market recently. One that stands out is Spice. It is a WA based magazine that focuses on the quality produce and personalities of the WA food industry - and it is refreshingly light on advertising.

It's published seasonally and available at The Grocer and most newsagencies.

Ancient Easter and Today's Traditions

The Pagan's Easter

Have you ever wondered why we give chocolate eggs at Easter time? Like many, I assumed it was a recent invention created by the industrious marketing chaps at Cadbury's or some other long established chocolate manufacturer. However, a bit of research has revealed that a number of theories surround the celebration of Easter and the giving of eggs.

Most theories agree that Easter was originally a Pagan festival. Around the second century A.D. Christian missionaries seeking to convert the peoples of northern Europe realized that the time of the crucifixion roughly coincided with the Pagan festival that heralded the return of spring and commemorated Ostara - the goddess of offspring and springtime. The Old English word for Easter, 'Eastre' refers to Ostara.

Christian Easter gradually absorbed the traditional symbols and rituals of the Pagan festival. One of these rituals (believed to be started even earlier by the Egyptians and Persians to symbolize the renewal of life) was the giving of coloured eggs. How the eggs became chocolate, however, is believed to be a modern invention.

Christian Easter

Historically Christian Easter was preceded by Lent, a period of 40 fasting days. The breaking of the fast (Easter Sunday) was where all the forbidden fruits were consumed at a lavish feast. Depending on which part of the Christian world you were in, this feast might have been concluded with tsourekis (in Greece), torta pasqualina (in Italy), pashka (in Russia) or simnel cake (in England). Many of these

foods are still prepared and consumed today during the Easter period.

(For further information on the origins of Easter you can refer to www.easter-traditions.com or www.gourmetsleuth.com/easter. Recipes for the traditional Easter dishes can be found in *Gourmet Traveller*, April 2004)

The Grocer's Easter – Australian Chocolate Fish and Italian Bread!

Somehow we've moved even further away from these ancient traditions at The Grocer. But we still think it's important to celebrate – whether you're rejoicing in the new season or celebrating for religious reasons.

This year instead of chocolate eggs on offer, we have chocolate fish and chickens. Don't let this digression stop you from enjoying these delicious treats handmade in the Yarra Valley by Kennedy & Wilson – one of Australia's finest chocolate makers.

Instead of scrambled eggs for our Easter Sunday breakfast we'll be having panettone. If you didn't get to try this delicious Italian cake at Christmas time, Easter is your opportunity to indulge. Traditionally enjoyed lightly toasted with marscapone and a glass of champagne, it makes a great change from the usual fried offering. It's just as lovely on its own dipped into hot coffee or used to make a bread and butter pudding. If you'd like one, get in quick because there are only a few left and they are half price.

Whatever you do this Easter, we hope it's accompanied by good food and great company.

Emma's Kitchen

Dukkah and Lemon Roasted Chicken with Beetroot Salad

Emma E. Pears

Chicken

4 chicken marylands
4 tbsps Greg Malouf Classic Egyptian Dukkah
4 lemons, thickly sliced
4 knobs butter
Salt and pepper
York Extra Virgin Olive Oil for drizzling
Extra butter for roasting pan

Carefully, without tearing, loosen the skin from the meat of each maryland, then push one tbspn of dukkah and a knob of butter into the pocket.

Butter the base of a roasting pan and lay lemon slices down before placing the chicken marylands on top. Drizzle with the olive oil and season well. Roast at 170°C for 30mins or until juices run clear. Remove from oven and rest while you prepare some couscous (according to the instructions on packet).

Serve chicken on couscous with a traditional Middle Eastern/North African beetroot salad and a green leaf and quail egg salad to the side.

Beetroot Salad

10 small/med beets, trimmed (reserve the baby leaves to put in your green salad)
2 cups Meredith Dairy Sheep Milk Yoghurt
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 lemon, juiced
3 Drops Extra Virgin Olive oil to serve
Salt and pepper

Scrub well to remove any grit from the beets. Steam beets whole for roughly 20mins until tender but not soft. Set to the side to cool before trimming root and stems. Dice into 1.5cm pieces.

Whisk olive oil, lemon juice and garlic together. Add the yoghurt a spoonful at a time, mixing well between additions (note: do not add lemon juice mixture to the yoghurt, as this can cause the yoghurt to curdle).

Once the dressing is prepared, add the beets and season to taste. Best prepared several hours or one day in advance. Serve chilled.