

sunday LUNCH

Tradition states that Australians love nothing better than a Sunday barbecue. So why not celebrate the arrival of spring with some early season sensations?

ONE of the special times of life is sharing tasty healthy food with friends and our favourite time of the week to do this is Sunday lunch. Sometimes this extends into dinner, becomes dinner and goes long into the night. But who cares? It's Sunday, the kids can run around and still be in bed early for Monday school day.

The spring season in Cairns is perfect for long late lunches as it's warm enough now to sit outside and enjoy plenty of food yet not too sticky and hot to cook up a feast. It's ideal if you want to relax and be able to spend time at the table chatting and not be in the kitchen. Choose dishes that can be prepared beforehand and finished with minimal fuss. Of course, the best way to make life easy is invite a few friends and get them to bring a dish each. Don't be shy about directing the menu, a little front will achieve the best result for all as there is no point having six chicken dishes or too many things to barbecue. Spread the work around, something cold, something to bake and something for the dads or, even better, the teenagers, to barbecue. Teaching your children some basic skills can come in handy and every Aussie kid should know how to barbecue by the age of 14. For eight adults and a few kids here's some recipes to create a varied grazing lunch.



Craig Squire is the chef and director of the award-winning Red Ochre Grill in Shields St.



Summer lamb salad

This Mediterranean style dish is a classic (or should be) and is perfect for banquet lunches or plated as a colorful dinner dish. 4 to 6 lamb back straps approx 800g total. Marinate in olive oil, basil, cracked black pepper and garlic.

Salad

100g rocket
3 roma tomatoes – diced
½ continental cucumber – diced
1 red onion – diced
200g bocconcini – cubed
80g pitted Kalamata olives
20g basil leaves - picked

* Roast capsicum, marinated artichoke hearts also are a welcome addition to this dish
Balsamic vinegar and olive oil to dress
Garlic aioli

Grill lamb to medium rare and rest

* Chef's tip: To rest means put lamb to the side of the barbecue in warm spot for about 15 minutes, this relaxes the meat and congeals the blood – for tenderness and easy slicing.

To serve
Assemble salad ingredients evenly on platter
Slice lamb and sit on top salad
Drizzle with vinegar and oil
Dollop aioli on top



Pips chicken salad

This is a favourite with kids and parents and is easy to prepare beforehand then served later. Serve with crusty bread.

1 whole roast chicken
Red onion
Slivered almonds
Fresh seedless green grapes
Mayonnaise
Rosella tomato chutney

Pick and de skin chicken meat and chop into 1cm dice
Roast or brown almonds in pan
Finely dice onion
Pick grapes

Combine above with chutney and mayo to taste (or as diet will allow!!)
Place in iceberg lettuce cups on open platter

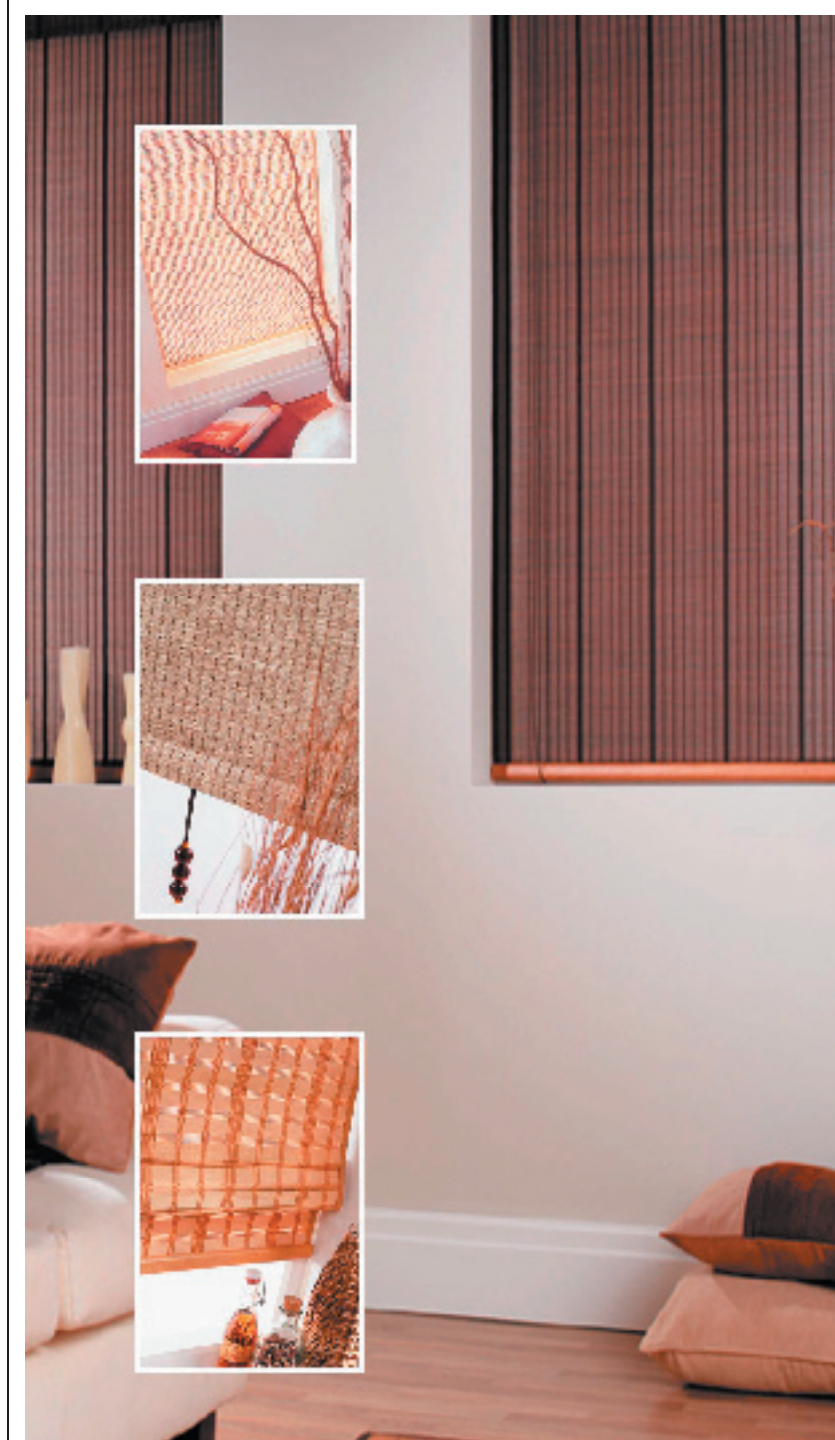
Fresh whole fish baked in paper bark

1 x 3kg whole fish – buy fresh and local – sweet lip, nannygai, coral trout, barra or mangrove jack are all great for this dish
Have your fish monger scale the fish for you.
Paper bark is so much better than aluminum foil, both for your health and the flavour, and is available from all good garden stores, your nearest tree or from my restaurant.
This dish can be enhanced by placing lemon myrtle, sliced lime, ginger or herbs inside the fish belly.

Lay out paper bark (see image) with fish on top, wrap, tie with twine. Place on baking tray and splash a little water over fish and tray.

Bake in pre heated oven for one hour at 165C.
Open wrapping just as serving so all guests can feast on the beautiful and appetizing aromas.

Enjoy these three dishes with a great pinot noir or unwooded chardonnay.



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