



'La Table de l'Abbé'

The Abbot's Table

Summer

Saturday 20th February 2021



*'The abbot's table must always be with guests and pilgrims.'
Rule of St Benedict, chapter 56*

Welcome to the summer Abbot's Table!

The entrée this evening is inspired by my grandmother Alma Molly's version of the classic French farmhouse terrine, which she called 'potted meat', usually made with whatever offal she could procure from the local butcher (he used to give us liver to catch yabbies). She would cook it in a pudding basin in her wood stove, over which she seemed to perpetually preside. After it had been pressed and cooled, she then wrapped it in a linen tea-towel and I'd wait in eager anticipation till she'd turn it out for supper on hot summer nights – delighting in its glistening wobbly amber jellied top – and serve it at the kitchen table with her amazing homemade pickled onions and fresh pickings from Pop's garden – *grosse lisse* tomatoes and crisp cucumber soaked in brown vinegar and sugar.

Fresh fish is synonymous with summer, and how blessed we are to live in this country where we enjoy it in variety and abundance. These plate-size beauties chosen for our main course are simply baked with New Norcia olive oil, fresh herbs, salt flakes and black pepper. I'm of the strong conviction that negotiating a few bones is worth the flavour achieved when cooking a fish whole... and who said one shouldn't drink red wine with fish? Nonsense; the redder the better. Along with the traditional sauce from Provence, I intended to serve Lyonnaise potatoes...but I suspect most people would (secretly) prefer chips.

A cheese board is an essential part of any French culinary experience and I hope you enjoy tonight's offerings.

It is our tradition in the monastery to eat fruit in place of desert during summer – Ah! what sheer delight to wander into the orchard and pick sun-ripened plums, nectarines, peaches, figs and grapes. Tonight's poached summer fruits, some of which come from the monastery orchard, have been enhanced with a visit to the monastery liquor cabinet.

Bon appetit!

Le Menu

Entrée

Terrine Maison

Terrine of ox tongue, smoked duck breast and pork belly, with beetroot and sherry vinegar chutney, a salad of pickled summer vegetables, and toasted New Norcia zucchini bread.

Vin: New Norcia Rose, 2017

(providing a little sweetness to offset all that vinegar)

Plat Principal

Poisson entier cuit au four

Whole baked fresh summer catch with provençale sauce, buttered summer French beans, and hand-cut chips.

Vin: Mommessin Beaujolaise-Village 2018

Radicchio and witlof salad with walnut oil dressing.

Interlude

Fromage

A selection of fine French cheeses served with New Norcia sour-dough baguette & biscotti.

Dessert

Fruits d'été pochés

Fig poached in dark spiced rum with strawberry crème anglaise;

Yellow peach poached in peach schnapps with blueberry coulis;

Blood plum poached in New Norcia Abbey liqueur muscat with mango purée;

Served with house-churned vanilla bean ice-cream.

Vin: Koolama Botrytis Semillon Premier Release, 2006

Café

Served with treats from the wood-fired oven, and a night cap from the bar.

"It is a summer day in Burgundy, where the light has a vibrant clarity quite unlike that of English summers. Sitting at the long white table in the shaded room with its slatted shutters, we seem



to be enclosed within that mysterious and complicated world in which, by eating and talk, we transform what comes to us by way of our senses into our own distinctive life. But, as those who are waiting at table come and go with the dishes, there is revealed through the long doors, in bursts of limpid sunshine, another world of *things*, clear and triumphant in their independent existence, stones and plants and trees, insistent upon being seen in the exactness of their contours, defining themselves in colour and form and movement, simply,

gloriously and beyond all argument *being*. In such a setting only the most insensitive eye could fail to note the challenge of all in the world that *is*, that carries in it a truth and rightness that determines it to be just this and not that. Women and men of scientific training, whose business it is to work with this world of things, normally acquire that instinctive respect for and appreciation of creation which is also the mark of gifted gardeners, cooks, musicians, artists, and poets."

Aelred Squire, *Asking the Fathers* (1973)