



Winter: In season

Beetroot
Kale
Carrots
Celeriac
Chestnuts
Citrus
Fennel
Kiwifruit
Jerusalem artichokes
Leeks
Parsnip
Pomegranates
Silverbeet
Spinach
Swedes
Tamarillos
Turnips

Flavours

Bay
Chervil
Coriander
Garlic
Oregano
Parsley
Rosemary
Sage
Thyme
Winter mint

Eat fresh Eat well

New Zealand's favourite cook, Annabel Langbein has crossed the Tasman to share her fresh food approach with Australia. **Anne Neilson** dons an apron to rediscover the joys of the kitchen.

It's a call to arms. It's a simple message really: Reclaim the kitchen and eat fresh! Annabel Langbein is bright, enthusiastic and passionate about food – and she wants us all to enjoy food like she does.

With her simple fresh food approach using a few fresh ingredients and a return to kitchen basics, she turns meals into a dining experience. How can food be this good?

"When you're eating fresh seasonal food you're eating real ingredients," Langbein says.

"I think we've all been seduced into convenience foods for managing our busy lives but at what cost?"

"It doesn't take long to cut a piece of broccoli or carrot and you end up with a dish that's better for you, costs less and there's less cost to the environment.

"We all want to be successful in our role as homemaker. When you eat fresh you can do that without a lot of effort because the produce is so good it does all the work for you."

Langbein is passionate about the kitchen and what it represents. Our disconnection to the kitchen, the table and fresh produce has led to the emergence of unhealthy diets and poor eating habits, poor nutritional and processed foods and contributed to our health problems – obesity, diabetes and heart disease. And the solution? Return to the kitchen and table and cook simple meals with fresh ingredients.

"Most of us are overwhelmed and think of cooking as a chore. We need to make it easy for people and make it enjoyable. Cook and talk to your partner and family, share in conversation that is enormously satisfying. Give pleasure. Receive pleasure," she says.

Keep it fresh and keep it simple. These are her basic rules.

"When you are new to cooking it's easy to think that making a dish more complex or adding more ingredients

“When you're eating fresh seasonal food you're eating real ingredients”

will make it better. But actually the opposite applies. Simplicity rules! Find the freshest, best quality ingredients and make them shine.

"Processed food accounts for so much of our diet. The amount of sugar and fat that people eat is high. If you go back to simple things it's easier for your body to know when you have had enough."

We are so conditioned, she says, to like the mouth feel of fats such as butter which make us feel satisfied and it provides flavour to dishes. Without butter it can appear bland. However, she suggests replacing butter or fats with "savoury deliciousness". Use herbs, spices and light sauces which provide umami, a Japanese term for taste enhancement or savoury deliciousness. An example of this, she says, is Japanese food which is light but intensely satisfying. The Japanese use miso and seaweed in their cooking to obtain this satisfying palate.

Spicing up Winter

"I enjoy spicy aromatic food in Winter and find Asian style dishes based around lentils, grains and vegetables satisfying to eat without generating extra unwanted kilos. Cravings for hot, belly-filling food see the preparation of hearty one-dish meals – big pots of richly flavoured stews and soups that can be dipped into as the week progresses. Salads take a backseat, coming into play as light starters or side dishes to accompany a hot main course.

Find a good source of natural stocks or make your own in bulk and freeze to ensure hearty flavours in soups and stews. Cut down on the butter and cream and look to spices and other flavourings to give depth to Winter dishes. Fresh spices such as cardamom, cloves, fennel, cumin, coriander, peppercorns, sweet smoked paprika as well as Thai curry pastes, frozen chillies, dried mushrooms, ginger and garlic with accents of Winter citrus deliver the goods when it comes to rich satisfying Winter flavours."

When choosing vegetables, she says, be aware of their nutrient value. Not all fruit and vegetables are born equal in the nutritional stakes. Broccoli is protective against cancer. Lettuce doesn't have much nutritional value. Pumpkin has high levels of beta-carotene that the body converts to Vitamin A.

Langbein developed her food passion in her mother's kitchen and was inspired by her mother's cooking. For the last 20 years, she has travelled and worked in kitchens around the world and written more than 14 cookbooks. *Eat Fresh: Cooking through the Seasons* is Langbein's first cookbook published in Australia. It showcases the very best ingredients

available each season in hundreds of simple recipes that are bursting with fresh flavours.

From Spring stir fries and Summer salsa to autumnal roasts and Winter soups, these home cooked flavours are down-to-earth and comforting - and simple to prepare.

Langbein's recipes look and taste amazing yet there is little preparation and cooking time to achieve such good results.

To eat fresh and to eat in season is very beneficial to health. Langbein says seasonal produce offers a better nutritional profile, it hasn't been transported long distances and it isn't processed. The best way to eat in season is to attend farmer's markets, buy local or grow your own.

"The rhythms of the harvest match our tastes. At the end of Winter, we're craving the fresh green leaves of Summer. In Winter, we like filling meals – rich stews and leeks and sweet potatoes.

"When you eat fresh and in season, you eat a lot more fruits and vegetables. A lot of people wouldn't get their quota of five servings of vegetables a day if they didn't eat fresh."

"It's time to slow down, get back to basics and create food that nourishes both the body and the soul. We need to connect to the rhythms of nature so we can enjoy eating fresh, seasonal fare at its very best." ♥



Eat Fresh: Cooking through the Seasons by Annabel Langbein, published by

Simon & Schuster 2009. RRP: \$34.95. For cooking demonstrations or recipe ideas visit www.annabel_langbein.com



MOROCCAN LENTIL SOUP

Serves: 6-8.

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 1 hour

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2-3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 tbsp grated fresh ginger
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tbsp ground cumin
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- ½ tsp each ground cinnamon, smoked paprika and tumeric
- 1 tsp chilli flakes
- Pinch of saffron (optional)
- 2 carrots, peeled and grated
- 2 stalks celery, finely diced
- 250g pumpkin, grated
- 400g can tomatoes in juice
- 2 cups puy lentils, washed
- 9-10 cups water
- 1 tsp salt and grinds of pepper
- ½ cup chopped fresh coriander or parsley

Method

1. Heat oil in a medium-large saucepan and gently fry onion, garlic, ginger, tomato paste and spices until aromatic and onion has softened without browning.
2. Add vegetables, lentils and water and simmer on lowest heat for 1 hour. Season to taste.
3. When ready to serve, mix in coriander or parsley. Delicious served with crusty bread topped with hummus.
4. Soup reheats well – add coriander or parsley when serving.