



# Food FOR thought

As appetites grow for more seasonal, local, health-conscious and 'Instagrammable' menu items, hotel kitchens must innovate to meet ever-increasing epicurean demands - all while working within a limited budget.



Chef Reuben Radonich has been cooking since he was 15. He has worked with an array of talented chefs in five-star resorts along the South-East Queensland coast, as well as top hotels in the UK. He has also appeared on numerous TV cooking shows including ratings juggernaut, *Masterchef*, and is the executive chef at PFD Food Services. Driven by a passion for discovering new local produce and classic cooking techniques, Reuben knows a thing or two about food trends and preparing a recipe to a budget, so we asked him to share a few tips and recipe ideas for Queensland hotels looking to spice up their menu without breaking the bank. Here's what he had to say.

## Autumn/Winter Foods

There have been massive increases in the cost of most cuts of beef and sought after pork cuts such as ribs and belly. So seek out the cuts in less demand, such as pork cheek and brisket, which are perfect for winter.

Slowly braise your pork cheeks in beef stock with mirepoix (a finely chopped mix of onion, carrot and celery) and a nice port or sherry until tender. Alternatively, you could sous vide the cheeks, which means to cook them in a vacuum sealed bag placed in a low temperature water bath set to 62°C for 72 hours. Once cooked and chilled, sear in a pan and serve with potato gnocchi, fresh asparagus and a reduction of your

stock from the braising liquid (jus). For seafood in autumn/winter nothing beats a big bowl of fresh mussels, simply serve in white wine garlic sauce with chips or crusty bread. Mussels are very easy and quick to serve and they have a shelf life of five to seven days in specially vacuum sealed bags.

## Meat Cuts

Seek out the cuts with less demand: beef brisket, beef cheeks, pork cheeks, osso bucco, trotters. These are often simple to prepare and cost effective. For beef brisket, slow cook in an Asian master stock with fresh and dried aromatics on 140°C for four hours or until tender. Press overnight in a cool room, portion to 250-300g, sear in a pan, then

return to heat through in the master stock that has been strained of the aromatics. Serve with polenta chips, steamed bok choy, and chilli jam.

## Seafood

Explore different cooking techniques with seafood. I love confit ocean trout which only needs to be 150-160g and costing around \$4.50 a portion. Simply warm a deep pan of olive oil to 55-56°C, place a centre-cut piece of ocean trout in the oil, ensuring it is covered completely, and confit for eight to 10 minutes. Remove from the oil and bake for one minute on 180°C. Serve with celeriac purée, shiitake mushrooms and soy and ginger jus. Hotels could sell this dish for \$28 a serve.

Similar dishes are on menus in hatted restaurants for \$38. BBQ octopus or cuttlefish is another great seafood dish. Local Australian cuttlefish should cost around \$4 a portion, so you can create an amazing dish that's cost effective without using imported squid. Score the cuttlefish on the inside of the flesh. Marinate for at least one hour in fresh garlic, ginger, chilli and coriander. Simply grill on a char grill or a flat grill for one to two minutes. Serve with a green papaw salad dressed in chilli lime dressing.

## Vegetables

Fresh vegetable dishes can give you the best profit margins on your menus. As an apprentice, all my trimmings that

were wasted were scrutinised, and as an executive chef I did the same. Some local vegetables that I love to prepare and work with are celeriac, which you are able to roast, purée, or julienne and eat raw in a slaw; and zucchini flowers, stuff them with local goats cheese and tempura batter or steam.

## Flavours

Finger limes are still on the top of my list for much loved ingredients. Why? They are native to Australia, they are so versatile (will go with chicken, seafood, desserts, cocktails, beers, in dressings, sauces - you name it!) and are really yet to take off as a main stream garnish or accompaniment.

# KEEP *Healthy* CHOICES IN MIND WHEN PLANNING YOUR MENU

The top five food priorities in 2016 for Australians are...



EAT SMALLER PORTION SIZES (31 PER CENT)

# 2



EAT HEALTHIER SNACKS (23 PER CENT)

# 5

3 REDUCE SUGAR INTAKE BY SELECTING NATURALLY LOW-SUGAR FOOD (25 PER CENT)



THE *IPSOS FOOD CHAT* (CONSUMPTION, HABITS, ATTITUDES AND TRENDS) *REPORT 2016* SAYS AUSTRALIANS WANT TO OPT FOR UNPROCESSED FOODS FREE FROM ADDITIVES, AND LOW IN SUGAR AND FAT

“We want to eat more natural sugar substitutes, ‘no added hormone’ beef, organic chicken, stall-free pork, organic beef, plant-based milk alternatives, sugar substitutes and vegetable protein.

“We want to eat less artificial sweeteners, sugar from beverages, sugar from breakfast cereals, food additives, trans fat, fat from meat, sugar from sweet snacks and fat from dairy,” the report stated.

1 EAT MORE FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES (40 PER CENT)

# 1



4 CUT DOWN ON FAT (23 PER CENT)

# 4

