

Jan to Jun 2013



SPIRIT HOUSE

Restaurant & Cooking School

Have a sweet tooth? Try recipes from our new book

Free dessert recipes Page 6

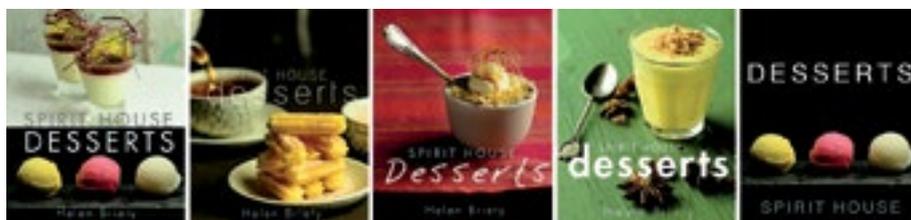
Break out your DSLR - it's time for food photography.

Tips, Tricks and Food Styling Page 2

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JUST DESSERTS



It's that time of the year again - cook book time. But this time, we asked four of our chefs, Libby, Renee, Nadine and Nathan, to give us their favorite Spirit House dessert recipes.

They rose to the task and came back with an offering of over 100 recipes - an eclectic assortment of frozen and chilled desserts, baked puddings, tarts and cakes, plus a decadent list of bite-sized treats to enjoy with tea or coffee.

And to top it off, there's some fantastic sweet garnishes which quite literally, put the icing on the cake.

Our book publishers, New Holland, took one read and jumped on board this project. They have already mocked-up some covers (see above).

This new book should be available online and in good book stores late April, early May 2013 - just in time for Mother's Day. We've included some recipes in this newsletter to stimulate your sugar cravings!



COOKING SCHOOL

Hands-on cooking classes, a great way to make new friends and learn new skills.

Classes: DAILY
9.30AM TO 2.00PM.
FRI & SAT. EVENINGS
4.30PM TO 9.00PM.

Bookings: SPIRITHOUSE.COM.AU/SCHOOL
PH: (07) 5446 8977 (EXT 1)
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RESTAURANT

A small slice of Asia on the doorstep of the Sunshine Coast.

Lunch: EVERYDAY FROM NOON.

Dinner: WED TO SAT FROM 6PM

Bookings: PH: (07) 5446 8994 (EXT 2)

Gift Vouchers

Spirit House Gift Vouchers make the perfect present. Vouchers can be used in the restaurant, cooking school or shop.

You can buy vouchers online: spirithouse.com.au/vouchers or give our friendly office a call on 07 5446 8977.

Food Photography 101

GET TO KNOW YOUR DSLR WITH FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY

As prices have dropped on DSLR cameras, more and more people are coming to the cooking school armed with the latest models from Nikon and Canon hoping to take some great food pics. We welcome these folks with open arms, nothing improves your skills like practice.

With that in mind, let's talk about what you need to get great pictures of food.

#1: Light. It doesn't matter if you're shooting with an iPhone or the latest most expensive DSLR, basically a camera is designed to let light in. The better quality of light, the better looking the photo.

A big south-facing window or a white sheet placed over a sunny window is marvelous light with which to shoot food. Because our sun is in the north, we avoid any harsh lights with windows that face south. The reason why pros use flashes and softboxes is these tools guarantee consistent lighting regardless of weather or room conditions - but in the end, it doesn't matter how you get the light, as long as the light is good.

#2: Lenses. One of the big advantages of using a DSLR is the lens choices that are available to you. A \$1500 f2.8, 85mm lens is going to give you amazing picture clarity and the ability to create dramatic depth of field. It's the shallow depth of field that people love in food photography. That part where the first few centimeters of the dish are in focus and the rest just falls into blur.

#2: Go Manual. Once you get the lighting right, switch your camera into manual mode. Set the aperture and shutter speed to get the look you want. A popular style is to place your food so it's lit from behind. So you need to expose for the food facing you, which will be darker than the background. By shooting in manual mode you bypass the camera's desire to expose for the whole picture. Doing it this way will have your food nicely exposed and the rest of the picture will have a lighter background.

So, my advice is don't get hung up on sensor size or pixels. Simply find some soft, diffused light - get into manual mode, open up your aperture and play with angles, lighting and exposure. Lastly, use your viewfinder to compose your shots - look for angles, move things around in the background if they're in the way. If you're going to all this trouble then you should read the article on styling below.



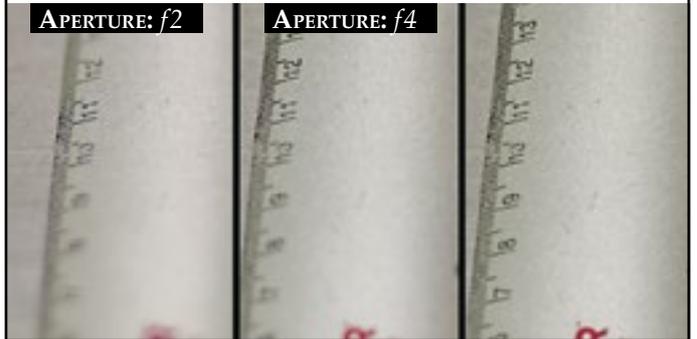
DEPTH OF FIELD EXPLAINED - THE POWER OF APERTURE

You control depth of field with aperture - *A* mode on Nikon and *Av* on Canon. The number after the *f* is a fraction. So, *f2* means the diameter of the aperture is $\frac{1}{2}$ the width of the lens.

f4 is $\frac{1}{4}$ the width and so on. Artistically we can direct our subjects attention to where we want, using aperture. In the diagram below *f2* focuses your eye on the number 11.

APERTURE: *f2*

APERTURE: *f4*



FOOD STYLING

Following on from photography, it's also important to look at the food styling. When we shot the recipes for the new dessert book we had nearly 120 recipes to shoot, which creatively is quite taxing, as we had to design a different look for each recipe.

Remember, we eat with our eyes first. So when presenting food at home, or when photographing, the easiest way to get great visual results is to add color and more especially, to add height by carefully layering and stacking the various recipe components or garnishes.

If you're styling food for home, or to practice your photography, there's one thing to keep in mind. The picture should tell a story. Small touches such as colourful napkins, antique serving spoons, decorative bowls and plates etc. all create a visual focus or talking point, and make the photograph much more interesting.



Brulee on its own is bit boring. Looking at the shadow we can see that it's lit from the 2pm position.

Adding the fruit garnish to the top gives it height and more interest. Not practical for eating but that's not what we're here for.

The real story for a brulee is FIRE. Bring in the blow torch to make the photo interesting. At a dinner party you can torch the brulees at the table for added drama.



Sometimes it's hard to make an item look interesting and that's when 'telling a story' saves the day and the photoshoot. This recipe calls for a sauce so rather than simply pour it around the plate, we introduce a spoon and capture the sauce falling.

Treats From New Book

Spirit House **HISTORY of DESSERTS**

When Spirit House started, it was never the intention to focus solely on traditional Thai cuisine. Our aim was to give modern twists to Asian ingredients and cooking methods. But over the years Spirit House became 'branded' as Thai - apart that is, from our desserts, which have always fused classic Western techniques with Asian influences.

*P*alm Sugar and Lemongrass Pannacotta

Panna cotta:

2	LARGE STALKS OF LEMONGRASS
440 ML	WHIPPING CREAM
150 ML	FULL CREAM MILK
45 G	CASTOR SUGAR
75 G	PALM SUGAR
2	LEAVES GELATIN

METHOD:

Bruise the lemongrass by hitting repeatedly with the back of knife, pestle or a meat mallet. Place the lemongrass, cream and milk into a saucepan and warm over a low heat.

Once warm, add both palm sugar and castor sugar and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Bring mixture to a light simmer for 20 minutes. Remove mixture from heat, cover and let the flavors infuse for half an hour.

After 20 minutes, soak the gelatin in some cold water for 5 minutes to allow it to soften. Place the panna cotta mixture back onto the heat and return to a simmer. Squeeze out any excess water from the gelatin and add the gelatin to the mixture, stir until dissolved and strain the mixture through a fine sieve.

Pour the panna cotta mixture into eight dariole moulds or ramekins and refrigerate for four hours or until set.

TO SERVE:

Run a small knife, dipped into very hot water, around the inside of each mould and turn the panna cotta out into the centre of each serving plate. Garnish simply with some very finely julienned rings of lemongrass and sprigs of micro mint leaves. If desired, add a scoop of Mint or Lime Sorbet.

*J*asmine Tea Chocolate Truffles

For the truffles:

250 ML	POURING CREAM
20 G	JASMINE TEA LEAVES
600 G	DARK CHOCOLATE FINELY CHOPPED DUTCH COCOA FOR DUSTING

METHOD:

Bring cream and tea just to the boil over medium heat. Let stand for 20 minutes. Strain through a fine sieve. Melt half the chocolate in a heat proof bowl over a saucepan of simmering water.

Remove from the heat, add cream mixture stirring well. Cover and refrigerate until set.

Melt 200 g of remaining chocolate over simmering water then add the last 100 g of chocolate, stirring until smooth.

Scoop balls of the set chocolate cream mix using a melon baller, then dip each ball into the melted chocolate.

(Or, as in the photo, pipe the mixture into cigars, let chill, then dip into the melted chocolate.)

Set aside onto wire rack and set

TO SERVE

Dust each ball with Dutch cocoa. Can be kept for a week in the fridge.



Lychee Brulee with raspberry swirl.
Recipe by Renee.



White Chocolate & Mint Puddings.
Recipe by Libby.



Palm Sugar & Lemongrass Pannacotta.
Recipe by Nathan.



Jasmine Tea Chocolate Truffles
Recipe by Nadine.

Treats From New Book

Lychee Brulee with Raspberry Swirl

Step 1

200 GMS	FROZEN RASPBERRIES
1 CAN	LYCHEES IN SYRUP
100 GMS	PALM SUGAR
1	VANILLA BEAN
500 MLS	PURE CREAM
6	EGG YOLKS
30 MLS	LYCHEE SYRUP (from the tinned lychees)
2	GELATINE SHEETS
2-3 TBSPNS	RASPBERRY JUICE
60 GMS	CASTOR SUGAR
MINT LEAVES FOR GARNISH	

Step 2

1/3 CUP	BROWN SUGAR
1/3 CUP	RICE VINEGAR
1	LIME, JUICED
1 TEASPN	SEA SALT

BRÛLÉE METHOD:

Pick through raspberries and remove 50g of large whole raspberries to use as garnish. Place berries on paper towel in a container to defrost in refrigerator. Save the thawed raspberry juice to make the swirl.

Slice 50g of the tinned lychees and keep for garnish. Make sure you don't discard the syrup as it is needed in the brûlée mix.

Break up palm sugar and place in a small pot with 150g of frozen raspberries and cook on medium heat until sugar dissolves and raspberries break down. Remove from heat and pass through a fine strainer. Set aside to cool.

Split vanilla bean, add to cream in saucepan and heat to just before boiling point. Remove from heat and allow to infuse for 10-15 minutes.

Whisk together egg yolks and sugar, pour in cooled cream, lychee liquor and 100 ml of tinned lychee syrup. Whisk until combined.

Soak gelatine in cold water. Over a double boiler, stir brûlée mix until it coats the back

of a spoon. This should be quite thick. Remove from heat. Strain water off the gelatine and add gelatine to brûlée mix, stirring until dissolved. Strain brûlée mix and discard vanilla bean.

Pour brûlée into 6-8 small glasses (120 ml) and place in refrigerator for 5-10 minutes until just starting to set.

Pour about 1- 2 teaspoons of raspberry juice onto each brûlée and using a skewer, gently stir, being careful not to mix too much because you want a raspberry swirl effect. Refrigerate to set completely - at least 3-4 hours, but preferably overnight.

TO SERVE BRÛLÉES:

Sprinkle top of each brûlée with castor sugar and with a brûlée torch, melt sugar to toffee. It is not recommended to use a grill for this brûlée as it will melt the gelatin. If slight melting does occur, place brûlée back in refrigerator for 10 minutes to re-set. Place brûlée glass on serving plate with a side salad of lychees, raspberries and garnish with tiny mint leaves or finely sliced mint.



Some behind-the-scenes photos from the dessert book photo shoot

White Chocolate & Mint Chilled Puddings with Toasted Rice Dust

Toasted Rice Dust:

50 G	JASMINE RICE
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For the Pudding:

180 G	FRESH BERRIES
50 G	RICE FLOUR
500 ML	MILK
120 ML	CREAM
80 G	CASTOR SUGAR
30 G	MINT LEAVES
120 G	WHITE CHOCOLATE, CHOPPED
10 G	ICING SUGAR

RICE METHOD:

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Spread the uncooked rice over a baking tray and toast in the oven for 20 minutes, or until the rice is lovely and golden. Remove tray from oven and allow rice to cool down. Place the rice into an electric spice grinder and grind to a dust

PUDDING METHOD:

Place the rice flour and 250 ml of the milk into a bowl and whisk together.

Combine the cream, sugar and remaining 250 ml of milk into a saucepan, place over a medium heat and bring to simmer. Remove from heat, add the mint leaves and allow the liquid to cool to room temperature. Blend well with an electric blender and strain the liquid to remove the mint.

Return the milk mixture to a medium heat and bring to a boil. Add in your rice flour and milk mixture, mixing well with a whisk. Cook

for another 4 minutes, until the mixture is nice and thick. Remove from the heat and add in the white chocolate pieces, stirring until they are well dissolved. Place the mix aside to cool a little.

Take 90g of the berries and divide them evenly between the base of six 100 ml espresso glasses. Spoon the cooled pudding mix into a piping bag and pipe the mixture over the berries, into the glasses. Transfer the puddings to the refrigerator to chill for at least 30 minutes.

TO SERVE:

Remove your berry, White Chocolate and Mint Puddings from the refrigerator. Sprinkle a fine layer of the Toasted Rice Dust across the top of each pudding. Scatter the remaining 90g of berries evenly across the puddings and dust with the icing sugar.

Latest News



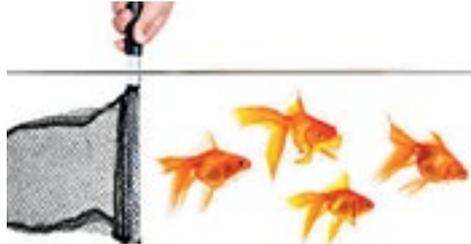
Our Perfect Guest Competition is Back

Twisted Root Burgers in the USA has a cute way of rewarding customers based on how they look. A few cents off the bill for 'best looking' etc.

Many years ago, Spirit House waiters ran a competition in search of their Perfect Guest. Waiters kept the names of their favorite guests and drew a monthly winner who received a Spirit House Gift. After 12 months, the thousands of names collected during the year were pooled and the year's winner drawn: First Prize was a flight to Bangkok for two as guests on one of our Thai Tag-along Tours.

For 2013, our Perfect Guest competition is back! Now our waiters aren't so superficial as to select your eligibility on how you look. Their criteria is all about restaurant thoughtfulness. Things like arriving at your booked time, calling if you need to cancel or to add more guests to your table, keeping your kids seated at the table etc. You get the idea.

So if you are dining at Spirit House from January to December 2013, it could well pay to be especially nice to your waiter. You might just find yourself jetting off to Bangkok in February 2014.



Where Have All the Fish Disappeared To?

In the great documentary 'Jiro Dreams of Sushi', 70 year old sushi master and 3 michelin star chef, Jiro, was talking about how good tuna is hard to find these days.

The problem, as he explains, is that when he was a kid, tuna was an expensive delicacy and only the best restaurants served it. "Now even sushi trains have it", he spits in disgust. So we've seen a decline in quality and availability of good tuna.

So too, with our signature dish, Crispy Whole Fish, which has been on our menu for 17 years. Until 3 months ago, we never had trouble receiving our daily delivery of this 1.5 kg snapper from our local suppliers. But stocks of this fish, which you have all come to love, are being seriously depleted. Some days, we can't buy the fish at all.

We had no idea just how many people came to Spirit House because of our whole crispy fish. Those days when the fish wasn't available, the amount of complaints amazed us.

In the meantime, our fish supplier has put Spirit House on his Top Priority List. But here's the interesting part to this story. The crispy fish is deep fried and dry, so we thought we could try a more sustainable Australian farmed fish, which are quite hard to find in Queensland.

In sourcing farmed silver perch we found that Australia produces nearly 220 tonne a year (ironically some of the biggest fish farms are in Queensland) and most of their stock goes to Sydney or Melbourne markets.

Queenslanders, it seems, either don't want it or don't deserve it. Interestingly, many of the silver perch are sold live to Asian restaurants in our cities.



New Thai Tag-Along Tours for 2013

Looking for fun, food and adventure? We have you covered with our awesome four day Thai tagalong tours. But with just 8 spaces per tour you had better book fast.

DATES:

Feb: 25th - 28th

Mar: 4th - 7th

July: 2nd - 5th

July: 8th - 11th

We've had so many requests for more dates, we now have two tours in July 2013. We've widened the itinerary to include the following:

A visit to the elephant krall in Ayutthaya to watch the elephants bathe in the river and to get bull-dozed by the baby elephants as they walk around us looking for some food and a game to play.

A trip to an ancient, but still operating, rice mill we learn everything about rice production, from drying the rice through to the final polished, fragrant jasmine rice for which Thailand is so famed.

A walk to a silk weavers neighbourhood in Bangkok's back streets. Witness the complex hand dyeing and weaving process before purchasing a silk souvenir. Sure beats shopping in a department store.



In a spare room at the back of the house, Thai silk is dyed in vibrant colours where it will be woven into intricate patterns by the ladies of the house.

From the Restaurant

Lon, easy to pronounce – hard to find

If there's one dish that all Spirit House tag-alongers fall in love with on our tours, it's a Lon.

A devastatingly simple dish, a sublime mix of flavors, sadly a Lon doesn't seem to fall into the standard recipe repertoire of Thai take-away restaurants across Australia.

Even in Thailand, a Lon can be hard to find in a restaurant or on the street. This is because a Lon is basically a dip, so doesn't quite fit in a menu format - is it an entree, or a main?

But spend time with a Thai family and you're sure to be served a Lon with a platter of raw vegetables, including my favorite, white turmeric, to dip into the Lon.

Lons come in many variations and are a very old style food. In a cookbook from the court of King Rama IV (circa 1900) the Royal Lon was made with salmon - tinned salmon - after all, tinned salmon would have been a luxury item back then and fit for, well, a king.

A lon is basically coconut milk, fish sauce, palm sugar and tamarind

water with some form of minced meat or seafood. The ingredients are simple but if you balance the flavours correctly it should be salty, with a hint of sweet and a sour note.

Our chef, Simon, has included a prawn lon with rice crusted fish fillets on our new summer menu. Try his lon recipe below.

Spoon it over rice or use as a party dip served with fresh vegetable crudites.



NO PARTY WOULD BE COMPLETE WITHOUT A COCKTAIL TO GET THINGS STARTED. OUR BAR STAFF HAVE MANAGED TO SNEAK SOME OF THEIR FAVORITES INTO THE NEW DESSERT BOOK. HERE'S A SAMPLE.

Ginger Fizz

A light, refreshing and non-alcoholic mocktail guaranteed to put a smile on the face of the long suffering, designated driver. Serve in long, narrow glass.

For the Ginger Fizz

30 mls lemongrass syrup
3 chunks of lime
4 mint leaves shredded
1 ginger beer

Muddle the Ginger Fizz ingredients in a tall hurricane glass, half fill with ice, top up with ginger beer.

For the Lemongrass Syrup

8 stalks lemongrass
2 cups white sugar
8 cups water

To Make Syrup: Bruise and chop lemongrass roughly, place in saucepan with sugar and water. Bring to the boil, simmer for 2 hours. Cool then strain into clean 2 litre container.

THAI LON With Prawns

For the Lon

300 MLS COCONUT CREAM
100 MLS CHICKEN/VEGETABLE STOCK
100 G MINCED PRAWN MEAT
1 LONG GREEN CHILLI
thinly sliced on diagonally
1 LEMONGRASS STALK
white part only, thinly sliced
2 WHOLE KAFFIR LIME LEAVES
15 MLS TAMARIND WATER
20 MLS FISH SAUCE
½ TBSPN WHITE SUGAR
1 TBSPN CORIANDER LEAVES
picked individually.

LON METHOD:

In a small saucepan place coconut cream and stock and slowly bring to the boil. Reduce to a simmer and add the minced prawn meat, stirring to stop it from clumping.

Cook until it starts to slightly thicken then add the rest of the ingredients.

You may need to add a little water if it gets too thick.

Check the seasoning. It should be slightly salty with a subtle sweet and sour finish - adjust as necessary.

TO SERVE:

Place long in a small bowl and garnish with the picked coriander leaves.

You can serve lon as a stand alone dip with fresh crudites as a summer starter dish, or spoon it over crispy fried fish fillets or barbecued prawns as a sauce. But my favourite is to spoon it over steamed jasmine rice.