



THE ALCHEMIST OF FOOD

HERB FAUST'S IMPRESSIVE CREDENTIALS PUT HIM AT THE HEAD OF THE PACK OF PERTH'S TALENTED ROLL CALL OF CULINARY SUPERSTARS - AFTER ALL HE'S THE ONLY AUSTRALIAN CHEF WHO HAS TAKEN ON THE IRON CHEFS - AND WON



It's hard not to be seduced by Bunbury-born Herb Faust's attitude to cooking. The gently spoken driving force behind Herb Faust Food learned to appreciate the "simple things" thanks to his Thai mother's devotion to her Buddhist community.

"Every Saturday mum, my three siblings and I would go to Serpentine Monastery to provide the monks with their daily meal. They weren't allowed to feed themselves, and had to eat before lunchtime."

Herb's mother's unselfish and joyful approach to feeding others has undoubtedly left its mark on the chef's approach to cooking, whether it's for a high end private dinner party, a corporate breakfast or a one off event, such as last year's inaugural 'An Evening For the Animals' fundraiser.

"It's important to me that I make as much as possible from scratch, that I use ingredients which have a relevance

to the season and perhaps introduce my clients to a new taste or flavour."

His seasonal menus certainly reflect this commitment – expect locally produced White Rocks veal breast, served with a tuna tartare, confit of potato aioli and green harissa, or a coconut ice cream made entirely dairy free yet still packing an incredible creamy punch.

It's fair to say that Faust shares his literary's namesake talent – he's a sorcerer indeed.

Herb's skills have been honed under the tutelage of some of the best in the game.

"During college, I was mentored by David Hamilton – formerly of Rottnest Lodge – then after a stint at the Wildwood Brasserie in Yallingup under Aaron Carr, I came back to Perth to work under Hamilton again at E Cucina."

Two years with "passionate" Scotsman, Graham Arthur, followed, providing an "amazing

grounding" for the young chef.

"It laid the foundations for the kind of chef I wanted to be, drawing on my Thai influences but using the freshest ingredients and maintaining a balance at all times."

Not adverse to a little snow on his shoes, Herb also spent three winters at Thredbo, again working with Arthur, developing his fine dining style and achieving a collection of accolades during his time on the slopes.

"After that I worked at Kerry Packer's polo farm, with heaps of catering events and even the chance to cook a steak burger for Kerry himself," he remembers with a smile.

Finally the lure of his hometown proved too strong and Herb took the head chef spot at his old alma mater, E Cucina before swapping the "crazy" hours of the commercial kitchen for a more family-friendly option as head chef at Scotch College.

CULINARY KUDOS:

Herb in action as he creates dishes from his home dining menu, using the best local ingredients available.



HERB FAUST'S RICE MILK ICE-CREAM

I use this base to make my coconut rough ice-cream for my current winter menu. I set the ice-cream in a lamington tray, freeze, then cut into bars. It is then triple crumbed with puffed rice, my own dried black rice and coconut and finally, it's deep-fried. Sublime.

Rice milk

- ½ cup brown rice, soaked in water overnight
- 800ml coconut milk (I use Chef's Choice which has no emulsifiers)
- 200ml coconut cream (I use Mae Ploy which has no emulsifiers)

Blend the drained brown rice with half the coconut milk until smooth. Pour into a heavy based pot with the remainder of the coconut milk. Bring the milk to the boil, whisking constantly then reduce to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes. Pass the milk through a very fine strainer, extracting as much of the milk as possible. Discard the rice pulp. To finish, stir through the coconut cream into the rice milk and set aside.

Ice-Cream

- 8 egg yolks
- 300g caster sugar
- 1 qty of warmed rice milk

In a heavy based stainless steel pot, mix the sugar with enough water to form a paste. Brush down the sides of the pot with a little water to get rid of any excess sugar. Bring the sugar to a soft boil (115°C). Meanwhile, whisk the egg yolks on high in a mixer to a very thick consistency. Slowly and carefully pour the soft boiled sugar into the egg yolks while whisking. Reduce the mixer speed and slowly pour in the rice milk. Continue whisking on a low speed until cool. Transfer the mixture to a freezer safe bowl in your freezer. Whisk every half an hour for up to four hours or until set. Freeze overnight.

"Feeding 170 hungry boarders was wonderful, and I used the same processes I would have done in a restaurant, yet with a more appreciative audience," says Herb, who has two children with wife Deanna, Jackson, 9 and Jasmin, 6.

Channel 7's 2010 series of Iron Chef Australia gave Herb the opportunity to showcase his skills in front of a national television audience, going on to win the tough competition against My Kitchen Rules regular, Guy Grossi.

"Lamb was the key ingredient, and I created four dishes – a 'lambscape' portrait, a late night lamb sandwich, a chico roll and a lamb roast."

It was a menu which won on the night, and propelled Herb further

towards his ultimate goal of being one of Australia's premier chefs.

Nowadays, Herb is concentrating on building his own venture, which provides the well heeled suburbs of Perth with unique dining concepts, whether it's an intimate dinner party or larger special occasions.

"I create a seasonal degustation menu and bring all the food, equipment, crockery, napery and staff to serve our clients in their own homes."

Herb has also created a sensational new range of salads and 'grab and go' items for the Herdsman in Churchlands, offers a 'Hands on with Herb' opportunity to learn how to prepare a three course meal in your own home, as

well as ad hoc large scale catering events – such as the recent Breast Cancer Care WA long table lunch – which have a habit of wowing all those lucky enough to be in attendance. A book is in the pipeline, as well as personal appearances at WA's burgeoning foodie festival scene, but it's all par for the course for one of Perth's most modest high achievers.

"I love taking my mother's dedication to feeding the monks as my starting point in my career – I think she would have been proud of what I've achieved. ●

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HERB'S MENUS AND EVENTS, VISIT WWW.HERBFAUSTFOOD.COM.