



# 'La Table de l'Abbé'

*The Abbot's Table*

## Summer

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> 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)



# 'La Table de l'Abbé'

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## Autumn

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2021



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

*Welcome to the autumn Abbot's Table!*

*Just as the flowering purple jacarandas are a sign of the approaching liturgical season of Advent, the iridescent leaves of the claret ash and liquid amber trees announce the season of autumn. Equally beautiful – in a more rustic kind of way – are the earthy tones, textures, aromas and flavours of autumn mushrooms. I recall childhood memories of Sunday drives into the countryside in my father's pride and joy – his 1960's Chrysler Royal (which he bought from a bloke at the pub, and was in fact, an old bomb) – to forage for mushrooms. I remember the sense of thrill when discovering one of these luscious beauties and the corresponding bitter disappointment when one's discovery turned out to be a cow-pat. Upon return we would fry these field mushrooms in heaps of butter (we didn't worry about cholesterol in those days) and eat them on slices of leftover bread-stick from the 'Hot Bread Shop' – a 1970's institution of Melbourne suburbia. This was a very welcome change from the usual Sunday fare of tinned tomato soup and crumpets. Anyhow, if you don't share my love of these fabulous fungi, we will quite happily leave them out of this evening's main course of roasted baby chicken...it's a peasant-style dish, so make sure you get stuck into it with your fingers; hot finger towels will be provided.*

*You will find little touches of autumn throughout the menu: The entrée will feature a grilled fresh sardine. May to October are the best months for sardine fishing as this is when surface waters are warmer, plankton is more abundant, and sardines overeat, which makes them accumulate large quantities of fat, making them more flavoursome. For dessert we'll celebrate another autumn beauty... the humble pear.*

*As Qoheleth says in the Book of Ecclesiastes "for everything there is a season" – and while he might be interpreted as drawing a grim picture of life – he is also interpreted very positively: enjoy the pleasures of life, the "gifts" of God.*

*We hope you enjoy this autumn evening of sharing God's gifts of food, wine, music, and good company...Bon appétit!*

# Le Menu

## Entrée

*Une petite assiette de fruits de mer*  
*Barbecued tiger prawn with aromatic tomato relish;*  
*Salmon gravlax with shaved radish and mirin & dill vinaigrette;*  
*Smoked trout mousse on toasted New Norcia zucchini loaf;*  
*grilled new-season sardine marinated in chili oil.*  
*Vin: New Norcia Abbey Chardonnay, 2017*

## Plat Principal

*Poussin rôti*  
*Whole baby chicken roasted with truffle oil and fresh herbs,*  
*served with lardons, Ottolenghi's miso butter onions, marinated*  
*artichokes, autumn portabello mushroom stuffed with chicken*  
*liver pâté, and a chicken-parsley jus.*  
*Vin: La Vieille Ferme Cotes-Du-Ventoux, 2019*

## Musical Interlude

## Fromage

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

## Dessert

*Tarte aux poires*  
*A tart of autumn pears poached in pear cider and Chartreuse,*  
*served with bitter-sweet chocolate sauce and New Norcia honey*  
*and cardamon house churned ice-cream.*  
*Vin: New Norcia Abbey Rosé, 2017*

## Café

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

# Le Vin

New Norcia Abbey Chardonnay, 2017

*An elegant, full bodied wine. The palate is well textured with tropical melon and peach flavours. This is a fresh youthful wine with a crisp clear acid finish.*

La Vieille Ferme Cotes-Du-Ventoux, 2019

*This varietal blend of carignan, cinsault, grenache and syrah from Famille Perrin on the slopes of Mont Ventoux (Rhône Valley, France), has a beautiful red colour, with purple reflections. It has notes of red and black fruit (blackberry, blackcurrant), rich, spicy, and aromatic.*

New Norcia Abbey Rosé, 2017

*Made with hand-picked and selected fruit, this is a gentle wine with depth of flavour and real fruit characteristics.*

