



A dish from Northland's 'Innovative Chef of the Year' OWEN SINCLAIR

My style is about robustness – flavours inspired by French, Spanish, Thai, Japanese, and Chinese cuisine. I also design creative wood-fired pizza menus and quality home-style Irish Pub food for McMorrissey's.

Whilst historically Northland has not been able to provide its chefs with all ingredients, it has come a long way in recent years.

More and more we are obtaining access to locally-grown boutique products, eg figs, olive oil, truffles, snow beans, paua and oysters.

Along with this more unusual fare come the regular fruits, vegetables and seafood. I feel it is always better to support local where possible. The quality of the product is often better, due to the reduction in 'food miles'. The product arrives fresher and, of course, it's always great when we can "keep the money local!"

This dish definitively depicts Northland to me. The sea, rich volcanic soils, warm climate and green pastures leading to native bush. My input with this dish from the beginning stages has brought together all the flavours of Northland.

I grew the spinach, oranges, basil (grown in summer and frozen in olive oil) and the thyme in my garden at home. The new potatoes were grown by a friend of mine and I caught the snapper myself in the waters off the Whangarei Heads.

This is a simple dish made from ingredients which are as local as you can get – fresh and easily accessible. A favourite of mine is the vibrant taste of basil and orange together. Snapper is the most widely caught fish in Northland, bountiful in estuaries, harbours and the open ocean that surrounds us. ■



fillet of snapper

oven baked with a basil crust, wilted spinach, crushed new potatoes & an orange thyme cream

INGREDIENTS (serves 2)

- 2 portions of fresh white fish – approx 200gm
- 4-6 new baby potatoes
- Wilted spinach
- Basil crust
- Orange thyme cream
- Chargrilled orange

Basil crust

- 1 full cup of fresh chopped basil
- ½ cup olive oil
- ½ an onion, diced
- 1 tsp chopped garlic
- 3 cups fresh coarse bread crumbs
- Salt and fresh ground pepper

Sauté the onion and garlic in the olive oil, then cool and add to the breadcrumbs. Add the basil, then season and mix thoroughly. The crust should stay together when squeezed, and then crumble if disturbed.

Orange thyme cream

- Zest of 2 oranges and juice of 3 oranges
- Juice of 1 lemon
- Dash of white wine
- 600ml cream
- 1 tsp chopped fresh thyme
- Little salt and pepper

Reduce the orange juice, lemon juice and wine down to only a couple of tablespoons, then add the cream. Reduce the cream to a sauce (coating) consistency, then add the thyme near the end of cooking, and season. If using dry thyme add it in with the juice as the flavour takes longer to release.

To serve

Boil potatoes in salted water, then crush with a little olive oil or butter and seasoning. Crust and bake the fish for approximately 10 minutes at 200°C. Season and wilt the spinach in a little butter. Oil and chargrill the orange. Assemble as shown, garnish and serve.

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