

COUNTRY CHEF MATTEO CARBONI

Matteo and Fiona Carboni enjoy Christmas lunch with their children Sofia and Filippo, and Fiona's parents, Sue and Steve Sutherland, at the couple's enoteca and wine bar in Angaston, South Australia. FACING PAGE A festive table setting.



*buon natale*

FAMILY AND FOOD ARE ALWAYS THE FOCUS OF MATTEO CARBONI'S CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS, BOTH IN HIS NATIVE ITALY AND AT HIS NEW HOME IN THE BAROSSA.

RECIPES MATTEO CARBONI WORDS VIRGINIA IMHOFF  
PHOTOGRAPHY MARK ROPER STYLING LEE BLAYLOCK







**Snapper risotto** (recipe page 76)  
Perfect with the gorgeous blend of grenache blanc, grenache gris and grenache noir in the Les Clos Perdus L'Extrême Blanc from southern France.



**WHEN MATTEO CARBONI** was a child growing up in northern Italy, Christmas fare was firmly set in tradition. Matteo is now a chef and lives a world away in the heart of the Barossa Valley with his Australian wife Fiona and their two children — Sofia, seven, and Filippo, five — where they run Casa Carboni Italian Cooking School & Enoteca.

Since the Carbonis relocated from Italy to Australia in 2011, and then to Angaston early the following year, Matteo's Christmas menus have combined old and new, reflecting the food cultures of his birthplace, his new home and, of course, summer in Australia. "For me, Christmas is the middle of winter and it's hard to replicate that here," Matteo says. "So, we try to create a nice menu somewhere in between, with tradition, and local produce."

According to Fiona, family Christmases — wherever they may be — are hands-on for everyone. "We share the preparation and cooking. My parents made the move from Wagga Wagga to Angaston and they both love cooking, and the kids love making the pasta. Over the last few years they have become more involved in the preparation."

While Matteo prefers to use imported parmesan, balsamic vinegar, rice and prosciutto for an authentic Italian flavour, after that he looks to showcase producers from the Barossa and nearby regions. "Local produce here is good and I wasn't expecting this when I first came to the Barossa. For me, the Barossa was famous for wine, but it should be famous for its produce because it's amazing."

The panzanella with SA king prawns is the perfect example of Matteo's knack for bringing together Italian and Australian traditions. "Everyone in Australia eats prawns at Christmas and panzanella is a classic in Tuscany," he says. Risotto, on the other hand, is a sentimental favourite. "I made that for our wedding in Australia. I love making risotto — we use a good brand of rice from Italy and people enjoy it a lot."

Back in his home town of Forlì, in Emilia-Romagna, Matteo's Nonna Pia always cooked rabbit at Christmas. "She would have got an old one, and slow cooked it for a very long time." In Australia, Matteo slow cooks local Hutton Vale lamb. "Our good friends the Angas family farm lamb and it's a beautiful meat, a bit more Australian than rabbit but cooked in a traditional way and the caponata is a nice side."

However, there's no antipodean twist when it comes to the northern Italian filled pasta, cappelletti (little hats). Matteo's grandmother used to make it in advance for Christmas, then freeze it, and he continues the tradition. "It's 150 per cent traditional for my family — no cappelletti, no Christmas for me! My nonna would bring it to us frozen in a big esky."

Sadly, Matteo's nonna passed away about five years ago. "His nonna was the pasta maker for the whole family and spent days preparing for Christmas," says Fiona. "When we go back to Italy each July, Matteo does the feast preparations and we make up for all those missed family gatherings." *Casa Carboni Italian Cooking School & Enoteca is at 67 Murray Street, Angaston, South Australia. 0415 157 669; casacarboni.com.au*

RECIPE TESTING DIXIE ELLIOTT WINE SUGGESTIONS DAVE BROOKES



## MATTEO CARBONI COUNTRY CHEF

**Panzanella with king prawns** (recipe page 76)

The fresh, slightly earthy aspect of both the panzanella and the baked custards are well matched to the bright and textured lines of the Pranzegg Tonsur, a savoury white blend from Bolzano in the Italian Alps. **FACING PAGE, FROM TOP** Christmas lunch combines Italian traditions and Australian flavours; Matteo cooked this risotto for the couple's wedding reception in Wagga Wagga; Fiona and Matteo outside Casa Carboni; homemade Christmas decorations.



PANZANELLA WITH KING PRAWNS

Serves 4 (See photograph, page 75)

- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
  - 1 garlic clove, peeled, crushed
  - 2 bay leaves
  - 12 large green prawns, peeled leaving tails intact, deveined
  - extra virgin olive oil, to serve
- PANZANELLA**
- 1 Lebanese cucumber, peeled
  - 500g ripe tomatoes, roughly chopped
  - 200g stale ciabatta bread, sliced
  - 1 small red onion, peeled, finely diced
  - 1 celery stick, finely diced
  - ⅓ cup white wine vinegar
  - 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
  - ⅓ cup fennel fronds

Combine oil, garlic and bay leaves in a large glass bowl. Add prawns and stir until coated with marinade. Cover and place in refrigerator for at least 1 hour to marinate. (You can begin marinating the prawns up to 1 day ahead.)

To make panzanella, cut cucumber in half lengthways, then use a teaspoon to remove seeds. Place cucumber seeds and tomatoes in a food processor and process until smooth. Finely dice cucumber and place in a bowl.

Tear ciabatta into small pieces and place in a baking dish. Pour tomato puree over ciabatta, and top with diced cucumber, onion and celery. Drizzle with vinegar and oil, and season with sea salt and pepper. Cover and place in refrigerator for at least 2 hours or overnight to develop flavours.

Heat a frying pan over a medium heat. Season prawns with sea salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper. Cook prawns for 2–3 minutes each side or until just cooked through.

Just before serving, finely chop half of fennel fronds and stir through panzanella. Place an 8cm ring mould on a serving plate and fill with one-quarter of panzanella, gently pressing down. Remove ring mould and repeat with remaining panzanella. Top panzanella with prawns and garnish with remaining fennel fronds. Drizzle extra virgin olive oil around plates to serve.

SNAPPER RISOTTO

Serves 4 (See photograph, page 74)

- ¼ cup olive oil
  - 1⅓ cups carnaroli or vialone nano rice\*
  - ½ cup white wine
  - 150g snapper fillets, cut into 2cm pieces
  - 20g butter
  - 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
  - 20g finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
  - 1 tablespoon finely chopped oregano
  - 1 tablespoon finely chopped chives
  - 1 tablespoon finely chopped marjoram
  - extra finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, to taste
- FISH STOCK**
- 1.5kg snapper heads and bones
  - 1 carrot, peeled, diced
  - 1 brown onion, peeled, diced
  - 1 celery stick, diced
  - 1 bay leaf
  - 6 peppercorns

To make stock, place all ingredients and 12 cups of water in a stockpot. Bring to a simmer over a high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and gently simmer for 30 minutes. Strain through a fine sieve into a heatproof bowl. Discard solids.

Place 6 cups of fish stock in a clean saucepan. (Freeze remaining stock for later use.) Place pan over a medium-low heat and hold at a gentle simmer.

Heat olive oil in a large saucepan over a medium heat. Cook rice, stirring, for 3 minutes or until grains are hot. Season with sea salt flakes. Add wine and stir for 3 minutes or until liquid evaporates.

Add 2 ladlefuls of hot stock. Cook, stirring, for 5 minutes or until stock is absorbed by rice. Continue adding stock, 1 ladleful at a time, stirring after each addition, until stock is absorbed and rice is al dente. (This will take about 16–18 minutes.) Add snapper and stir through rice. Remove from heat. Stir in butter and extra virgin olive oil. Cover and stand for 5 minutes.

Add parmesan, oregano, chives and marjoram, and stir to combine. Season to taste and add more parmesan, if required. Serve immediately.

*\*Available at gourmet food stores, delicatessens and some supermarkets. Substitute arborio rice.*

ASPARAGUS SAVOURY BAKED CUSTARDS WITH HOT SMOKED SALMON SALAD

Serves 4

- 2 bunches asparagus, trimmed
- 30g finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup pure cream
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 50g mixed salad leaves
- 150g hot smoked salmon

Preheat oven to 160°C. Grease four ⅔-cup capacity ovenproof ramekins.

Fill a large, deep frying pan with water and bring to boil over a high

heat. Blanch asparagus spears for 3 minutes or until bright green and tender crisp. Drain and refresh in cold water. Trim asparagus spears 3cm from tips. Place asparagus tips in a bowl and set aside until required.

Roughly chop remaining asparagus and place in a food processor. Add grated parmesan, eggs and cream, then process until mixture is smooth. Season with sea salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper. Pour asparagus mixture evenly among prepared ramekins. Place ramekins in a baking dish. Pour enough hot water into baking dish to reach halfway up sides

of ramekins. Bake for 1 hour or until custards are just set. Remove ramekins from baking dish and set aside to cool.

Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a frying pan over a medium heat. Cook reserved asparagus tips, stirring occasionally, for 1–2 minutes or until golden. Transfer asparagus tips to a medium bowl and set aside to cool. Add salad leaves and toss to combine.

Carefully turn out baked custards and place on serving plates. Arrange hot smoked salmon and salad mixture around baked custards. Drizzle with remaining oil to serve. >



Asparagus savoury baked custards with hot smoked salmon salad





**Cappelletti in Brodo** (recipe page 80) A blend of marsanne and roussanne from France's Rhone Valley, the delicious Dard & Ribo Crozes-Hermitage Blanc complements the subtle flavours of this pasta dish.



## SLOW-COOKED SHOULDER OF LAMB

Serves 4

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 brown onion, peeled, roughly chopped
- 1 celery stick, roughly chopped
- 1 carrot, peeled, roughly chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled, crushed
- 3 bay leaves
- 2 sprigs rosemary
- 2 sprigs thyme
- 2 sprigs sage
- ¾ cup white wine
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 8 cups beef stock
- 1.2kg lamb shoulder, trimmed
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- eggplant & zucchini caponata, to serve (recipe follows)

Heat extra virgin olive oil in a large saucepan over a medium heat. Add onion, celery, carrot, garlic, bay leaves, rosemary, thyme and sage, and stir to combine. Season with sea salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper. Cook, stirring, for 10 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Add wine and cook for 4 minutes or until evaporated. Stir in tomato paste and cook for 1 minute. Add stock and bring to boil. Remove from heat and set aside to cool.

Preheat oven to 150°C. Place lamb in a large, deep baking dish. Rub with olive oil and season well with sea salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper. Pour vegetables and stock mixture around lamb in baking dish. Cover lamb with baking paper, then cover baking dish with a tight-fitting lid or foil. Roast for 4–5 hours or until meat is tender and falling off bone. Serve with caponata.

## EGGPLANT & ZUCCHINI CAPONATA

Serves 4

- 1 celery stick
- 1 medium eggplant, trimmed, thickly sliced
- 1 zucchini, trimmed, quartered lengthways
- 1 red capsicum, deseeded, quartered
- 1 small red onion, peeled, quartered
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 125g cherry tomatoes
- 1 sprig thyme
- extra virgin olive oil, to serve >



**Slow-cooked lamb shoulder with eggplant & zucchini caponata** This beautiful lamb dish deserves an equally stunning red wine from Piedmont — home of the Slow Food movement — and the Flavio Roddolo Barbera d'Alba is the perfect choice. **FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT** Five-year-old Filippo likes to help out in the kitchen; Fiona and Matteo were drawn to the Barossa's fantastic produce; serving cappelletti is a Christmas tradition in Matteo's family; white flowers and silver foliage add a festive touch to the table.



## PESTO

1 sprig basil, leaves picked  
4 black olives, pitted  
1 teaspoon white wine vinegar  
1 teaspoon pistachio kernels  
1 teaspoon pine nuts  
1 teaspoon raisins  
1 teaspoon salted capers, rinsed  
1 garlic clove, peeled, crushed  
1 tablespoon caster sugar  
⅓ cup extra virgin olive oil

Using a vegetable peeler, peel celery into long strips, then finely shred. Place in a bowl of cold water and refrigerate until required. (This will make celery curl.)

Preheat oven to 200°C. Line 2 large baking trays with baking paper. Spread eggplant, zucchini, capsicum and onion over 1 of prepared trays. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons of olive oil and season with sea salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper. Roast for 20 minutes or until tender. Set aside until required.

Reduce oven temperature to 120°C. Cut cherry tomatoes in half and remove seeds. Place tomatoes on remaining prepared tray and drizzle with remaining olive oil. Season with sea salt and pepper. Remove leaves from thyme and sprinkle over tomatoes. Roast for 40–45 minutes or until soft.

Meanwhile, to make pesto, place basil leaves in a bowl and cover with boiling water. Drain immediately. Place in a small food processor with olives, vinegar, pistachios, pine nuts, raisins, capers, garlic and sugar. Season with

sea salt and pepper, then process until finely chopped. With motor running, slowly add extra virgin olive oil in a thin, steady stream and process until a thick sauce forms.

Drain celery. Arrange roasted vegetables on a serving platter. Spoon pesto around roasted vegetables and top with celery curls. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil to serve.

## CAPPELLETTI IN BRODO

*Serves 8 (See photograph, page 78)*

3½ cups plain flour or pasta flour  
6 eggs

## FILLING

200g piece pork loin, on the bone  
4 cups finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano  
freshly grated nutmeg, to taste

## STOCK

2 chicken carcasses  
1kg ox tongue, rinsed  
500g osso buco  
1 brown onion, peeled, halved  
1 carrot, peeled, roughly chopped  
1 celery stick, roughly chopped  
1 bay leaf  
8 peppercorns

To make stock, place all ingredients in a large stockpot and cover with 16 cups of water. Bring to boil over a high heat. Reduce heat and simmer, skimming foam from surface regularly to ensure a clear stock, for 5–6 hours. Cool. Remove tongue and osso buco, and reserve for later use. Strain stock through a fine sieve into a large bowl. Discard solids.

To make filling, heat a frying pan over a medium-high heat. Cook pork for 4–5 minutes each side or until golden. Cool. Cut pork from bone and finely dice. Place pork and parmesan in a food processor and season with nutmeg. Process until a smooth mixture forms. Transfer to a bowl and season with sea salt flakes. Refrigerate until required.

To make pasta, place flour in a mound on a clean work surface, then make a well in centre. Break eggs into well and use a fork to lightly whisk. Gradually incorporate egg into flour until mixture resembles crumbs. Using your hands, continue to mix until dough comes together. Knead for 8–10 minutes or

until dough is smooth. Wrap dough in plastic wrap and place in refrigerator for 30 minutes to rest.

Divide dough into manageable pieces. Using a pasta machine, roll out dough until 1–1.5mm thick. Alternatively, roll out pasta on a lightly floured surface. Cut pasta into 5cm squares. Place 1 teaspoonful of filling on each square. Fold in half to form a triangle, ensuring edges are sealed. Wrap 2 corners of triangle around your index finger to form cappelletto shape, and join 2 tips, slightly twisting one over other. (Wet with a little water to seal, if necessary.) Place on a tray and cover with a clean tea towel. Refrigerate until ready to cook.

Place 12 cups of stock in a large saucepan. (Freeze remaining stock for later use.) Bring to boil over a high heat. Reduce heat to medium. Add a handful of cappelletti and cook for 2 minutes or until cooked through. Use a slotted spoon to transfer cappelletti to a serving bowl. Repeat, in batches, with remaining cappelletti. Ladle stock over cappelletti and serve immediately.

**NOTE** *Prepare the cappelletti up to 1 month ahead and freeze until required.*

## PANETTONE WITH CREMA AL MASCARPONE

*Serves 4*

4 egg yolks  
½ cup caster sugar  
450g mascarpone  
2 eggwhites  
4 slices panettone, lightly toasted  
cocoa powder, to garnish

Using an electric mixer, beat egg yolks and sugar for 5 minutes or until light and creamy. Add mascarpone and beat for 2 minutes or until light and fluffy. Transfer to a clean bowl. Wash electric beater and bowl.

Using an electric mixer fitted with a clean whisk attachment, whisk eggwhite in a clean, dry bowl until soft peaks form. Fold eggwhite into mascarpone mixture, a little at a time, until combined. Cover and refrigerate for 2 hours or until chilled.

Spoon crema al mascarpone among serving plates. Top with panettone slices and dust with cocoa to serve. *CS*

Panettone is a traditional gift in Italy — “Mum would end up with four or five,” says Matteo.

**Panettone with crema al mascarpone**  
The complex, creamy brioche characters of Fallet-Prévostat Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut are a wonderful pairing with the richness of the mascarpone.