

THIS LIFE



FOOD

by Lauraine Jacobs

Turf and tide

In the spirit of more famous taste pairings, chefs are invited to make a meal of lamb and aquatic foods.



There are many classic combinations of foods that excite the palate – bacon and eggs, macaroni and cheese, peaches and cream, salt and pepper and spaghetti and meatballs, for example. How about matching lamb grown on coastal farms with food harvested from the nearby coastline and waterways, farmers Richard and Suze Redmayne asked themselves. So, they invited local and overseas chefs who offer Coastal Spring Lamb on their menus to create a dish that pairs this salty, sweet meat with fish, shellfish or coastal plants.

Richard Redmayne is the lead farmer and organiser of Coastal Lamb, a group of intergenerational family farms located on the east and west coasts of the North Island, where salt-laden winds blow over their herb-filled pastures. He says the aim of the competition was “to celebrate the unique point of difference of Coastal Lamb – its coastal provenance”.

Chefs from Asia and New Zealand rose to the challenge and international and local winners have been found – Johan Ducroquet, executive chef at Le Bistro Winebeast in Hong Kong, and Mat McLean from Palate in Hamilton. They will collaborate in cooking a lamb and seafood meal for coastal-farm families in February.

Ducroquet’s winning dish featured a Coastal Lamb loin and smoked eel pithivier, along with a slow-cooked confit Coastal Lamb shoulder croquette with gala apple and kiwifruit condiment, caramelised onions and honey, and a lamb jus.

McLean won with a tender Coastal Lamb loin and confit shoulder accompanied by smoked kelp, dashi potato, beach spinach, kimchi, white asparagus and kina butter.

Having been inspired, as a member of the judging panel, by the idea of matching lamb and seafood, I created this salad recipe to try over the summer holidays when I just might be able to forage for coastal herbs near our seaside bach. (For further notes on coastal foraging see the next page.)

SPRING LAMB COASTAL SALAD

200g spring lamb loin
 sea salt flakes
 freshly ground black pepper
 3 tbsp olive oil
 2 cups watercress
 4 radishes
 12 mānuka-smoked mussels
 ½ cup foraged seaweed
 ½ cup foraged seaweed flowers and coastal plant shoots or fresh herbs
GARNISH
 ½ lemon, zest and juice
 3 tbsp olive oil



Lamb cutlets with Middle-Eastern flavours. Left, spring lamb coastal salad.

Make sure the lamb is at room temperature and evenly coat it with plenty of salt and black pepper. Heat the oil in a small heavy-based frying pan until hot, then sear the lamb, turning frequently to give it an all-over golden-brown crust.

Turn the heat down, cover with a lid and leave on the heat for 4-5 minutes, before placing the meat on a plate, covering it with foil and allowing it to rest for at least 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, discard any thick stalks from the watercress, wash it and shake it dry. Thinly slice the radishes.

Remove the tough brown foot from the mussels, taking care to not break

the flesh.

Slice the lamb thinly.

Pick over the foraged seaweed and coastal plants for the salad and for use as a garnish. If you can’t get to the seashore, use fresh herbs and herb flowers.

Choose a few plant and herb sprigs to add to the salad and arrange the rest on four dinner plates. Toss together the lamb, watercress, mussels, radish and some of the foraged plants or herbs with the lemon juice and oil and divide between the plates. Serve at once.

Serves 4.

Wine match: sauvignon blanc.

Coastal foraging

I've often wondered how restaurant chefs lay their hands on the wild plants and herbs they cook with. I wanted to find some coastal gems for this week's lamb salad, so contacted Megan Corbett of Auckland's Element Food Service. She works with food producers, including registered forager Nathan McKenzie of Samphire and Seaweed, to find unusual and special products for her chef customers. McKenzie, who collects flora to order from undisclosed coastal locations near Auckland, sourced the sea plants used in my salad.



If you're exploring the coast this summer, keep your eyes peeled for some of these. The best places to look for edible coastal plants is around the high-tide mark of sheltered sandy inlets and harbours. Younger shoots are best. Take only as much as you need, leaving plenty so the fragile plants continue to grow and thrive.

LAMB CUTLETS WITH MIDDLE-EASTERN FLAVOURS

- 1 lamb rack
- 2 tbsp Middle Eastern dry-spice mix (za'atar or dukkah)
- 2 flat bread
- 1 cup fresh coriander leaves
- 4 tbsp beetroot chutney
- 1 cup sheep feta
- 3 tbsp pomegranate seeds

Carve the rack into cutlets and sprinkle the za'atar or dukkah over each piece of meat. Fire up the barbecue and cook the lamb over gentle heat until brown and crisp on the outside but still juicy in the centre.

Arrange a platter with the flat bread, fresh coriander, beetroot chutney and feta.

When the lamb is cooked, add to the platter, and sprinkle over the pomegranate seeds to garnish.

Serve at once.

Serves 2 but can be scaled up.

Wine match: syrah. ■



WINE

by Michael Cooper

Mission control

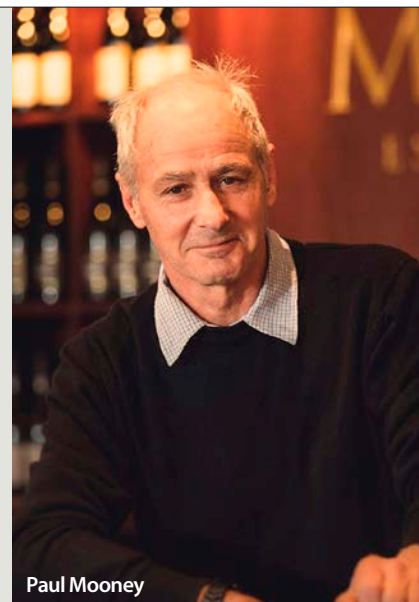
After stints in science and oil prospecting, a wine veteran finally found his passion.

Lots of milestones have passed recently in the wine industry. Soho, based in Auckland, is celebrating its 10th anniversary; Tohu, in Nelson/Marlborough, has turned 20; Alpha Domus, in Hawke's Bay, is now 30. At Mission Estate, also in Hawke's Bay, winemaker Paul Mooney has chalked up his 40th vintage.

After getting a science degree at the University of Waikato, Mooney worked on Campbell Island as a technician for the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, then as a field engineer for oilfield-services company Schlumberger in Australia. "I applied to study food technology at university," he recalls, "but I didn't get in, so ended up studying geophysics. My real passion has always been the science behind food and wine."

In 1979, Mooney joined Mission, established in the mid-19th century by the Catholic Society of Mary, as assistant winemaker. After training for three years under Brother John – winemaker since the 1960s and a pioneer of bottle-fermented sparkling wines in New Zealand – in 1982 he was appointed as Mission's first lay winemaker.

Mooney, who is described by a colleague as "not bold or brash, but very thoughtful", particularly likes making wines he views as challenging. "Red blends of cabernet sauvignon and merlot are the most interesting, with



Paul Mooney

different components from different vineyards that need to be blended. You really have to plan – there are so many things to consider."

His favourite wines to drink? Hawke's Bay reds, of course, including syrah. When matching his own wine with food, Mooney likes to keep things uncomplicated. "On the whole, white wine works well with fish and red wine works best with red meat. Sweet wine is good with desserts. Simple as that."

In the same year Mooney started at Mission, sémillon, a classic white-wine variety of Bordeaux, was planted in its vineyard at Greenmeadows, Taradale. Those 40-year-old vines gave the grapes for Mooney's 40th anniversary wine – **Mission Reserve Old Vine Hawke's Bay Sémillon 2018** (★★★★★, \$29).

Sold online and at the Mission's historic cellar door, this powerful (14.5% alc/vol), complex, deeply flavoured dry wine is a great tribute to Mooney's ongoing career. ■

WINE OF THE WEEK

Mission Hawke's Bay Merlot/Cabernet Sauvignon 2018 ★★★★★

This sharply priced red is based on merlot (77%) and cabernet sauvignon (19%), with splashes of malbec and cabernet franc. Full-coloured, with a fragrant bouquet, it is mouth-filling (13.5% alc/vol) and supple, with generous, berryish, slightly spicy and herbal flavours. \$16