


# H&G Living

## HOME FOR LUNCH

Book a table for eight in your home and invite friends over for a meal that makes everyone feel special.

RECIPES THOMAS JOHNS/DINING ABODE | STYLING MATT PAGE | PHOTOGRAPHY WILLIAM MEPPEN



Dee Preston hosts a lunch catered by award-winning chef Thomas Johns.

Gathering friends together when everyone seems busy is an occasion in itself – one deserving of something special. So when Sydney mother-of-three and former fashion/lifestyle publicist Dee Preston managed to wrangle her nearest and dearest for a catchup, she wanted to enjoy some time at the table too.

Enter Thomas Johns, an acclaimed chef who has turned his talents to cooking in home settings through his catering company, Dining Abode.

After chatting with Dee, Thomas devised a menu, then he and his team took over on the day, allowing her to focus on her friends and join the fun

"I can't believe this amazing food is coming out of my kitchen," exclaimed Dee as waiters rolled out the dishes that Thomas was cooking. As she and her friends lingered and laughed at the table, the waiters refilled wineglasses, whisked away empty dishes and did all the washing up.

Here, recipes from the day, adapted for the home cook. And a chef's tip from Thomas: make some of the components ahead as noted, and gently warm before serving as needed. **Menu serves 8 Dining Abode; 0401 067 156 or [www.diningabode.com.au](http://www.diningabode.com.au).**

### Watermelon with smoked salmon mousse

Prep: 40mins. Cooking: 12mins.

- 2 slices sourdough, crusts removed, cut into ¼cm cubes
- 2 large lebanese cucumbers, chilled
- 2 tbsp white wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp caster sugar
- 450g seedless watermelon, chilled, trimmed and cut into 8x 8x2cm blocks
- Baby herbs, such as parsley or celery cress
- Smoked salmon mousse**
- 100g smoked salmon, chopped
- 2 tbsp grapeseed or other vegetable oil
- 50ml ice water
- 3 drops of Tabasco, or to taste
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- 1 tsp lemon juice

1 Preheat oven to 120°C (100°C fan). Place bread cubes on baking tray. Bake for 10mins until crisp but not browned. Cool on tray.

2 To make mousse (up to 1 day ahead), place salmon in food processor and process for 1min, or until smooth. Add oil and water alternately in thirds, pulsing after each addition to incorporate. Stir in Tabasco and lemon zest and juice. Refrigerate in a resealable plastic bag.

3 Using a small melon baller, scoop 20 balls from each cucumber, trim off seeds and refrigerate until needed. Place vinegar and sugar in saucepan, bring to boil and stir to dissolve sugar. Remove from heat and allow to cool. Just before serving, stir in chilled cucumber balls and stand for 5mins.

4 Place 1 watermelon block on each plate. Snip one corner of bag containing chilled mousse to create a ½cm hole. Pipe 5 rounds of mousse on each plate. Top with 5 cucumber balls, croutons and herbs.

### Five-spice duck with pumpkin & soybeans

Prep: 40mins, plus 4hrs marinating. Cooking: 30mins.

- 2 tbsp good-quality five-spice powder
- 1 star anise, crushed
- ½ cinnamon quill, crushed
- 1 strip orange zest
- ½ clove garlic, crushed
- 2 duck breasts, skin on, bone removed
- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 cup shelled edamame soybeans, steamed

### Pumpkin logs and purée

- ½ large pumpkin such as Queensland blue, peeled and deseeded
- 25g unsalted butter, softened
- 1 tbsp sugar
- ¼ tsp finely grated lemon zest
- Rice crisps**
- Vegetable or peanut oil, for deep frying
- 2 rounds rice paper
- 1 eggwhite, lightly beaten
- Easy jus**
- 1 chicken stock cube
- 1 cup (250ml) chicken stock
- 1 tsp cornflour, dissolved in 2 tsp cool water

1 Mix together spices, orange zest and garlic, then rub all over duck breasts. Refrigerate for at least 4hrs or overnight.

2 To make pumpkin logs (up to 1 day ahead), use apple corer to cut 8x 7cm cylinders from pumpkin. Place cylinders, butter, sugar and salt to taste in saucepan with enough water to cover. Bring to boil, then simmer for 5mins, or until tender but still firm. To make purée (up to 1 day ahead), steam 400g of remaining pumpkin flesh for 15mins or until tender. Place in food processor with zest and ⅓ cup water and process until smooth.

3 To make rice crisps (up to 1 day ahead), heat oil about 3-4cm deep in heavy-based saucepan. Brush 1 rice-paper round with eggwhite. Cover with other rice-paper round. Brush both sides of rice-paper 'sandwich' with eggwhite. Cut into 8 triangles. Deep-fry in 2 batches for 30secs each, turning once, until puffed and crisp but not golden. Drain on paper towels. Cool and store in airtight container.

4 Preheat oven to 150°C (130°C fan). Heat ovenproof frypan over low heat. Place duck skin-side down; cook for 10mins or until skin browns (pour off oil as fat is rendered). Turn over; cook for 1min. Turn skin-side down. Bake for 8mins or until medium rare.

5 To make jus, transfer duck from frypan to a warmed plate and cover. Remove all but 1 tsp fat from pan. Crush stock cube in pan, add stock, bring to boil, then simmer for 3mins. Add cornflour mixture; simmer for 1min to thicken. Strain through a fine sieve.

6 To serve, slice duck breasts crossways into 2cm slices. Spread 2 tbsp purée on plate, top with 1 slice of duck, 1 pumpkin log, steamed soybeans, rice crisps and jus. >



**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT** Chef Thomas Johns of Dining Abode. Shapely and colourful vintage glassware was used as table decorations. Anouk Darling and Marie-Claude Mallat. Five-spice duck with soybeans and pumpkin. Keith Chee and Nell Simpson. Glassware from Luigi Bormioli. Flowers from Flowers by Teresa (throughout). **OPPOSITE** Watermelon with smoked salmon mousse. Tray from White Home. For Where to Buy, see page 234.



FIVE-SPICE DUCK WITH SOYBEANS & PUMPKIN



Text by Betty Baboujion



WATERMELON WITH SMOKED SALMON MOUSSE



**Roast lamb, peas, jerusalem artichokes & parmesan crumble**

Prep: 40mins. Cooking: 1hr 10mins.  
 2 sprigs rosemary, broken in half  
 2 cloves garlic, crushed  
 5 sprigs thyme  
 1 tbsp olive oil  
 ½ tsp crushed black pepper  
 2 racks of lamb (16 cutlets total)  
 100g frozen peas, thawed

250g jerusalem artichokes or parsnips, peeled, cut into ½cm dice  
 10g butter  
**Pea purée**  
 20g butter  
 1 french shallot, peeled and chopped  
 250g frozen peas  
 1 tbsp mint leaves  
**Parmesan crumble**  
 40g day-old sourdough bread, crust removed, cut into 1cm pieces

70g finely grated parmesan  
 20g flaked almonds  
**Easy jus**  
 1 chicken stock cube  
 1 cup (250ml) chicken or veal stock  
 1 tsp cornflour, dissolved in 2 tsp cool water

1 In large bowl or resealable plastic bag, combine rosemary, garlic, thyme, olive oil and pepper. Coat entire lamb racks and refrigerate for at least 4 hours or overnight.  
 2 To make parmesan crumble (up to 1 day ahead), preheat oven to 140°C (120°C fan). Place bread on baking tray. Bake for 12mins to dry out. Cool on tray. Increase oven temperature to 160°C (140°C fan). Spread parmesan on baking tray lined with baking paper. Bake for 8mins, or until melted. Cool on tray. Place almonds on another baking tray. Bake for 6mins, or until golden. Transfer to plate to cool. Pulse together cooled bread, parmesan and almonds in food processor to make rough crumbs.  
 3 To make pea purée (up to 1 day ahead), place butter and shallot in saucepan over medium heat. Cook for 2mins to soften. Add peas and ½ cup water. Bring to boil, simmer for 1min, then remove from heat. Add mint and whiz in blender, then push mixture through a fine sieve into a bowl. Cool immediately by setting bowl in a larger bowl filled with ice water. Season with salt. If making ahead, cover and refrigerate.  
 4 Preheat oven to 120°C (100°C fan). Place lamb on racks set over a baking tray. Bake for 30mins. Meanwhile, bring saucepan of salted water to a boil. Add diced artichoke and cook for 4mins. Add peas and boil for 1min. Drain, toss with butter and keep warm.  
 5 Remove lamb from oven. Heat frypan over high heat, then brown lamb for 30secs on each side to render fat. Slice bones off 1 lamb rack. Cut bones into smaller sections; set aside. Return boneless loin to frypan to seal cut; transfer to plate and make jus.  
 6 To make jus, place stock cube and stock in frypan, along with reserved bones. Crush cube, bring to a boil, simmer for 3mins, then stir in cornflour. Cook for 1min to thicken.  
 7 To serve, spread 2 tbsp pea purée on each plate. Slice each rack into 8. For each serving, plate 1 boneless loin and 1 cutlet with 2 tbsp each of artichoke-pea mixture and parmesan crumble. Drizzle with jus.

**Snapper, sweetcorn & seaweed with prawn brandade**

Prep: 30mins, plus 2hrs chilling and overnight standing. Cooking: 50mins.  
 8 baby zucchini with flowers  
 3 tsp vegetable oil  
 8x 50g snapper fillet portions, skin on  
 1 cup prepared *chuka wakame* (Japanese seaweed salad), available from Asian grocers and fishmongers  
**Sweetcorn purée**  
 30g butter  
 1 french shallot  
 3 cups frozen sweetcorn or kernels cut from 4 cobs  
 2 tbsp pouring cream  
 ½ cup (125ml) water  
**Prawn brandade**  
 200g (about 8 medium) whole green prawns, shelled, deveined (reserve heads and shells)  
 ¼ cup (55g) salt  
 1 medium desiree potato, peeled and cut into 3cm pieces  
 2 tbsp olive oil  
 1 clove garlic, peeled and chopped  
 2 french shallots, peeled and chopped  
 Juice of ½ lemon  
 1 tsp finely chopped flat-leaf parsley  
**Prawn oil**  
 1½ cups (375ml) grapeseed oil  
 Reserved prawn heads and shells  
 1 clove garlic, crushed  
 1 spring onion, chopped  
 1 star anise, crushed  
 2 tbsp tomato paste

1 To make prawn oil (start 1 day ahead), place 2 tbsp oil, prawn shells, garlic, spring onion and star anise in saucepan over medium-high heat. Break heads with the back of a spoon. Cook for 3mins, or until shells turn golden and mixture starts to >

**RIGHT, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Ali Yeldham. A toast to old friends. Glassware from Luigi Bormioli. **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Keith, Dee, Tony Bannister and Julie Davidson. Waiter Brian Stokes describes the next dish. Waterlilies and monstera leaves, casually arranged in a row of vases, make a gorgeous centrepiece.





**TERRIFIC TRIO**

Lunch was accompanied by delicious wines from the new vintage of Jaraman regional blends by Taylor's Wines: the award-winning 2009 Riesling (elegant and citrusy), the 2008 Pinot Noir (ripe with cherry flavours and spice notes) and the full-bodied 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon (earthy and complex).

< stick to bottom of pan. Stir in tomato paste and remaining oil. Cook, uncovered, on very low heat for 15mins, stirring occasionally. Stand overnight, then strain through a fine sieve. Set aside.

2 To make sweetcorn purée (up to 1 day ahead), place butter, shallot and corn in saucepan over medium-high heat and sauté for 2mins or until shallot is soft but not browned. Stir in cream and water, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 5mins. Blend until smooth, adding extra water if needed to make a loose purée. Press through fine sieve. Cover and refrigerate if making ahead.

3 To make prawn brandade (up to 1 day ahead), sprinkle salt over prawns. Refrigerate for 2hrs. Meanwhile, place potato in saucepan with enough water to cover, then bring to a boil and cook for 12mins, or until tender. Mash or push through ricer. Rinse prawns under cool tap water, pat dry with paper towels and chop finely. Place olive oil in a frypan with garlic and shallots, and cook over low heat for

2mins, or until soft but not browned. Add chopped prawns and sauté for 1min, or until just cooked. Remove from heat, then transfer to bowl. Mix in mashed potato, lemon juice and parsley. Cover and refrigerate if making ahead.

4 Cut flowers off baby zucchini. Remove and discard stigma/stamen from inside, then tear in half and reserve. Slice each zucchini diagonally in half. Heat 1 tsp oil in large frypan over high heat, sear zucchini halves for 1min, or until browned. Set aside. Add 2 tsp oil to frypan and when very hot, place 4 snapper fillets skin-side down in pan. Cook for 2mins, or until skin is browned and very crisp, and flesh is cooked ¾ way through. Turn over, reduce heat to medium, and cook a further 1min. Repeat with remaining fish.

5 To serve, place 1 spoonful of corn purée on each plate and smear. Top with about 3 tsp seaweed salad. Place 1 snapper fillet and 2 zucchini slices on plate, then top with a spoonful of prawn brandade and 2 zucchini flower halves. Drizzle a little prawn oil around plate.

**Mandarin sorbet, dark chocolate mousse & liquorice crunch**

Prep: 40mins, plus overnight chilling and freezing. Cooking: 30mins.

**Mandarin sorbet**

- 200g caster sugar
- 200ml water
- 1kg mandarins, peeled and deseeded
- 1 tbsp glucose

**Dark chocolate mousse**

- 250g good-quality 50-per-cent dark chocolate
- ¾ cup (160ml) water
- 50ml pouring cream

- ½ tsp finely grated mandarin zest

**Liquorice crunch**

- 50g traditional soft liquorice, chopped
- ¼ cup (60ml) water
- 3 tbsp caster sugar
- 1½ tbsp plain flour
- ⅓ cup plus 1 tbsp (47g) almond meal
- 1 tbsp brown sugar
- 2 tsp cocoa powder
- 25g unsalted butter, melted
- Sea salt flakes, for garnish
- Organic edible flowers, for garnish

1 Start this recipe 1 day ahead. To make mandarin sorbet, bring sugar and water to a boil in saucepan, stirring to dissolve sugar, and simmer for 10mins. Cool syrup to room temperature. Place in blender with mandarin segments and purée. Pass through fine sieve into bowl. Stir in glucose. Churn in ice-cream maker according to manufacturer's directions. (If you don't have an ice-cream maker, pour mixture into a shallow baking tray and freeze for 4hrs, or until almost firmly set. Transfer to food processor and process for 1min, or until smooth. Return to pan and freeze for 2hrs. Process again, freeze for 2hrs, then process again.) Transfer to airtight container and freeze until required.

2 To make chocolate mousse, place chocolate and water in metal heatproof bowl over pan of hot water (the bottom of the bowl should not touch the water). Stir when chocolate is melted. Remove from heat and stir in cream. Allow to cool to room temperature, then stir in mandarin zest. Using a hand-held mixer, beat at medium speed for about 1min, or until colour changes slightly (don't overmix or mousse will become too stiff). Pour into container, cover and refrigerate overnight.

3 To make liquorice crunch, place liquorice, water and sugar in saucepan and bring to a boil, swirling pan to dissolve sugar. Simmer for 7-8mins, uncovered, until liquorice is very soft and starts to melt. Remove from heat, transfer to blender and whiz until smooth. Pass through a fine sieve into a large bowl and allow to cool to room temperature. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 180°C (160°C fan). Add flour, almond meal, brown sugar, cocoa powder and melted butter to liquorice mixture. Line large baking tray with baking paper. Break liquorice dough into pea-sized pieces, placing on prepared baking tray about 3cm apart. Bake for 15mins. Cool on tray, then use the back of a wooden spoon to crush into gravel-like consistency. Store in an airtight container.

4 To serve, sprinkle 2 tbsp liquorice crunch on each plate. Top with 1 scoop each of mandarin sorbet and dark chocolate mousse. Sprinkle a little salt over mousse and garnish with flowers.



MANDARIN SORBET, DARK CHOCOLATE MOUSSE & LIQUORICE CRUNCH



Photograph by Julie Crespel (wine bottles).

Visit our website

Go to [www.houseandgarden.com.au](http://www.houseandgarden.com.au) for another delicious dessert recipe by Thomas: Coconut Pannacotta with Lychee Sorbet and Shaved Pineapple.