

Chef's Table

Follow Nature's cues and dine in style

This week **Graeme Pallister**, head chef at 63 Tay St, Perth, is of the opinion that Mother Nature knows best

WE SCOTS seem to feel (and fear) seasonal changes more than most. Summer does have a knack of disappearing pretty quickly, and before you know it we're wellie-clad. Then it's what feels like an eternity of bitter cold before the daffodils arrive.

We are still a happy bunch though. Maybe that's because we know how to eat for the cold.

At this time of year the body intuitively manages to catalogue food we crave by its nutritional value, energy value, water content and so on. Our bodies know what they need and crave it. We all know that in summer we feel more inclined to choose fruit and salad, and in winter we want carbohydrates. This simple cycle of colour, nutritional values, availability and tastes fits nicely with what we actually need — Mother Nature keeps an eye on us!

As a chef, seasonal changes are wonderful events. We have our eyes on the hills and noses in the air, waiting for the return of a good friend we haven't seen for a year. I'm never off my phone, checking what's newly available with suppliers, farmers and producers in Scotland, and in particular Perthshire. There's genuine excitement as we wait for the seasonal stars of the Scottish larder to appear. Produce like asparagus, trout or raspberries are the chef's version of a calendar. I tend to think in produce instead of months!

My favourite season by far is autumn. At this time of year my dishes change to something comforting yet light. I suppose it's what my body craves. In October, veg have a little more dirt on them, and trees are giving up their harvest — a perfect match for all the game that's on our hills.

Right now we're serving more potato dishes in both kitchens, and braising meats are filling our ovens. Delicious dumplings and gnocchi are making an appearance and of course lots of tree fruits are being roasted, pickled or made into compotes for the months ahead — so when the trees are bare we can still savour them.

For me, cooking is all about being in tune with the seasons. Get out there and visit farmers' markets or farm shops to see what's around. Or look for Scottish produce in your local supermarket. You simply need to choose what you fancy, and trust me — the flavours will work together. This is the greatest part of being a cook — being right there side by side with Mother Nature.



Graeme Pallister is a great fan of autumn and its produce.
Picture: Steve MacDougall.

chef'stip

MY TIP for this month is to do a little research into the seasonal food changes and availability — you can easily find monthly food calendars online. If you know what's in season, you can think ahead about some

dishes you might like to cook. There are multiple benefits to this way of cooking and eating, not just ensuring your nutritional needs are met, but seasonal food is generally cheaper and much more likely to be local. You'll be doing your bit for the environment and local economy too!

what's hot in the kitchen

by **Caroline Lindsay**

Our round-up of foodie news, products and events

In a jam

Following the glut of plums this autumn, Glogburn Farm Shop in Tibbermore, Perthshire has produced its own delicious Victoria Plum Jam. £3.50 a jar. www.glogburnfarmshop.co.uk

Time for tea

As part of the Dundee Literary Festival, make sure you head to Ms Battenberg's Travelling Tea Room at the Bonar Hall, Dundee. Set up for the duration of the Literary Festival, which runs from October 23-27, you can browse stalls from Aitken's Wines, Vanilla Inkers, Yuck n' Yum, Rosy Tuesday and others, and enjoy delicious snack, cakes and drinks courtesy of Ms Battenberg.

Serve up a winning dish

Calling all foodies and home chefs — the head chef at Dundee Contemporary Arts is sharing some of his recipes including pan-roasted lamb rump, moules marinières and tarte tatin — so you can try them at home yourself. Sign up online at www.jutecafebar.co.uk to

receive a regular newsletter containing the latest recipe, then try it at home and send an image of your creation via Twitter @jutecafebar, Facebook jutecafebar or email dutymanagerjute@hotmail.com; the best will be rewarded with a three-course meal for two in Jute.

Stylish start to Christmas

Start your festive season with the magical Christmas in November at Fairmont St Andrews. Buy gifts at the festive market, visit Santa with the children, sample Scottish produce at the food and drink tastings, watch cooking demos, and enjoy mulled wine and other festive treats. Nov 2-3, 10am-5pm. www.fairmont.com

Feast of food

A special Fife Farmers' Market during the St Andrews Food and Drink Festival (Nov 2-Dec 1) will offer a feast of food including a cookery demo with Martin Hollis of the Old Course Hotel in Church Square, St Andrews on November 2. www.foodfromfife.com

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