

Local flavours ARE REGIONAL WINNERS

Growing up as a farm kid, my childhood memories are filled with family events that revolved around food.

Sunday lunches at my grandmother's house with extended family started with running wild in her huge garden with a dozen cousins while the women helped in the preparations for the meal and the men sat outside talking.

The hand-embroidered linens and best silver came out to serve the home-grown roast meat and vegies and the light-as-air, sugar-dusted profiteroles that we ate with our eyes before we were allowed to bite into them.

The local food movement is in full swing, and it's hard to go past those country landscape views that many wineries enjoy.



By Kathy Cope,
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When my father harvested peanuts or navy beans, my mother looked for ways to use them every week. Even now I associate peanut biscuits, still warm from the oven, with a feeling of happiness and belonging. The same principle applied to whatever was in season on the farm - eggs, beef, vegetables or fruit - pick it fresh and use it.

Passionate foodie and official Food Ambassador for the South Burnett, Kingaroy chef and cookery lecturer, Jason Ford has been telling the fresh food story for years. He's seen local regional producers steadily making

the move towards quality over quantity, as the popularity of tv food programs and celebrity cooks makes people think about the freshness and quality of the ingredients they use.

Appearing at South Bank's Regional Flavours in July, Jason sees his Food Ambassador role as a conduit between local farmers and food processors and the market for quality ingredients, telling their stories through sharing of recipes and cooking demonstrations.

"It's not about the variety or the quantity of what's produced in the region, but the exceptional quality that gives produce from the South Burnett the edge in creating world class cuisine" he tells me. "That's why we're so successful at Regional Flavours."

I scan a few local websites and the number of award-winners from the area supports his view.

Of the big producers, Sunpork consistently takes home gold and silver from the Australian Food Awards across a number of its pork products. Among its brands, Barkers Creek pork is becoming a must-have on Brisbane restaurant menus as well as on weekly shopping lists.

Butchers across the South Burnett have taken note, and most have a specialy marinade for these thick pork loin steaks that take the humble meat and veg dinner to something worth staying home for.

Smaller operators are collecting accolades too, like Bunya Red Farm at the foot of the Bunya Mountains. Despite being in operation for less than a decade, the husband and wife team has won a swag of medals for their capers and caperberries. They reached a high point this year when they took out the State Winner - 2018 delicious. Produce Award for their capers in salt.



About 40km away, just Aus Garlic has also won recognition at the Australian Food Awards for their chemical-free Australian garlic. But it's their black garlic - smoky and sweet and begging to be hooked up with a soft cheese and nutty cracker - that has local and online customers lining up for repeat orders.

I first found black garlic at the mountain-top general store and cafe, the Trading Post in Maidenwell, while waiting to pay my lunch bill. My eyes were wandering across the 220-plus locally made pickles, sauces, chillies, jams and relishes when they landed on a small sealed bag labelled black garlic. As I picked it up for a closer look, a fellow shopper stopped, leaned over, placed a hand on my arm and told me in a conspiratorial tone, "That stuff is like manna from heaven - you have to try it." I couldn't ignore a recommendation like that and one pack of food-of-the-gods was added to my bill.

Passion and Innovation has been a winning combination for these smaller, family-run food businesses, helping them carve out specialy niches. Food that has that sense of being home-made or freshly prepared is appealing to more people as life becomes overfull with the busyness of work, family, sport and home.

The South Burnett has a lot to offer in destination tourism, and food makes up a good portion of this. Most wineries offer meals, from wood-fired pizza and platters to full lunch and dinner menus and these are experiences in themselves. The local food movement is in full swing, and it's hard to go past those country landscape views that many wineries enjoy.

Jason is preparing recipes for his Regional Flavours cooking demonstrations. He's taken inspiration from a recent teaching event in Indonesia, combining a gift of cacao nibs with bacon stock and maple syrup to make a sweet, salty sauce that he'll pair with a seared prosciutto-wrapped pork fillet.

The food gods will be in heaven.



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