



Soupe de poisson
(fish soup, recipe p 74)



With Bastille Day falling this month, our July issue seemed like the perfect time to share some recipes from my recent visit to France. I'm a Francophile from way back, so when I was asked if I'd like to travel to the Dordogne to host a week-long cooking school at La Combe en Périgord, I just couldn't say no.

Our hosts were Australian-born Wendely Harvey and her British husband, Robert Cave Rogers, who set up their residential cooking school in south-west France 10 years ago. La Combe is housed in a beautifully restored stone building, amid 16 hectares of farmland and woods.

The area around Périgord is known for everything from truffles and foie gras to mushrooms, walnuts and prunes. The guests and I would spend mornings taking in local sights and foraging for inspiration at the markets in the nearby medieval towns of Sarlat and Périgueux. Then it was time for lunch at one of the local bistros or restaurants, or to head back La Combe for a hands-on class in the custom-built kitchen – inspired by

"We'd spend mornings at the markets, then go back to La Combe for a hands-on class."

what we'd found or tasted, and all helped along admirably with a glass or two of something from Robert's fine cellar.

Sadly, our house party came to a end far too soon but with newfound friends and memories of good times shared à table, there was nothing else to do but start planning my next trip... *Valli will conduct a week-long cooking school at La Combe en Périgord, July 9-16, 2010. Visit: lacombe-perigord.com. (Valli appears at La Combe independently of her role at delicious. These are not delicious. events.) Valli flew to Paris courtesy of Singapore Airlines on the A380, which flies daily from Australia to Paris. Visit: singaporeair.com.au or tel: 13 10 11.*



Little onion tarts

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Makes 20

- 1 1/3 cups (200g) plain flour
- 2/3 cup (50g) grated parmesan
- 1/2 cup (125ml) extra virgin olive oil
- 2 red onions, thinly sliced
- 1 small red capsicum, thinly sliced
- 1 tbs chopped thyme, plus extra small sprigs to garnish
- 2 tbs brown sugar
- 2 tbs red wine vinegar

Whiz flour and cheese in a processor with 1 tsp salt and some pepper. Add 100ml oil and 2 tbs water. Process to coarse crumbs. Turn out onto a floured bench and use

hands to form into a smooth ball. Enclose in plastic wrap. Chill for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat remaining olive oil in a pan over low heat. Cook onion, capsicum and chopped thyme, stirring occasionally, for 20 minutes until softened. Add sugar and vinegar and stir for 10 minutes or until slightly caramelised.

Preheat oven to 180°C. Roll pastry on a floured surface to 5mm thick. Use a 6cm pastry cutter to cut 20 rounds. Place on a baking tray and prick with a fork. Cover with baking paper and another tray. Bake for 15 minutes. Remove top tray and paper. Top tarts with onion and thyme sprigs, then bake for 15 minutes or until pastry is golden. Serve warm as a canapé.

goat's cheese fritters

Makes 12

- 500g fresh ricotta
- 400g soft goat's cheese
- 1/4 cup (35g) plain flour
- 2 tsp thyme leaves, chopped
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup (100g) dry breadcrumbs
- Sunflower oil, to deep-fry
- Olive tapenade, to serve

Place ricotta, goat's cheese, flour and thyme in a bowl, season, then mash with a fork (or pulse in a processor). Add egg and mix until smooth. Form into 12 walnut-sized balls, then flatten slightly with your