

# Food for thought



WHAT'S COOKING? Tonya Jennings offers a tasty treat for guests at her On the Ridge Cooking School.

PHOTO: NICHOLAS FALCONER / 172601

By RAE WILSON

## Librarian turns to cookbooks and classes

**S**CALLOPS, ocean fish fillets and sashimi grade tuna. Tick. Pineapple, mango, peaches, passionfruit and lots of chocolate. Tick.

Add a librarian turned cooking school teacher. Blend with eight lively students and serve atop the Sunshine Coast hinterland with views of the rolling countryside to the coastline.

It's a recipe Tonya Jennings has

guests. And when you leave you'll have the perfect ingredient to plan your own dinner party – confidence.

Tonya, who has a lively personality and equally fabulous classes, has concocted a truly hands-on cooking experience using entirely locally grown or caught produce.

When I took a Thai cooking class in Bangkok, all the ingre-

measured, which took all the fun out of the experience.

The On the Ridge cooking school is about working from the ground up.

With three entrees and three desserts to prepare, we were split up into groups to whip up the ingredients that would take the longest to set.

I paired up with the gorgeous

newest girl pal. We began preparing peach melba jelly dishes for everyone because they needed to set in the fridge.

We combined the sugar syrup, without boiling, and then simmered half peaches, cut side down.

I learned that if they won't stay under the water, you just poke a piece of baking paper over them to seal the syrup in.

PAGE 20 | HighLIFE

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# Tonya's classes work from the ground up

FROM PAGE 19

WHEN they came out, the skin practically fell off.

After we mixed the gelatine and placed them in pretty moulds, we placed the peaches cut side up so they would look stunning turned up on the plate.

The other groups prepared the pineapple and mango pithivier with langues de chat, and the chocolate and orange tiramisu.

But instead of having us completely separate, Tonya would call us all together to show us the techniques behind each of the dishes.

We indulged in the surprisingly satisfying adventure of layering our own tiramisu creations in individual glasses.

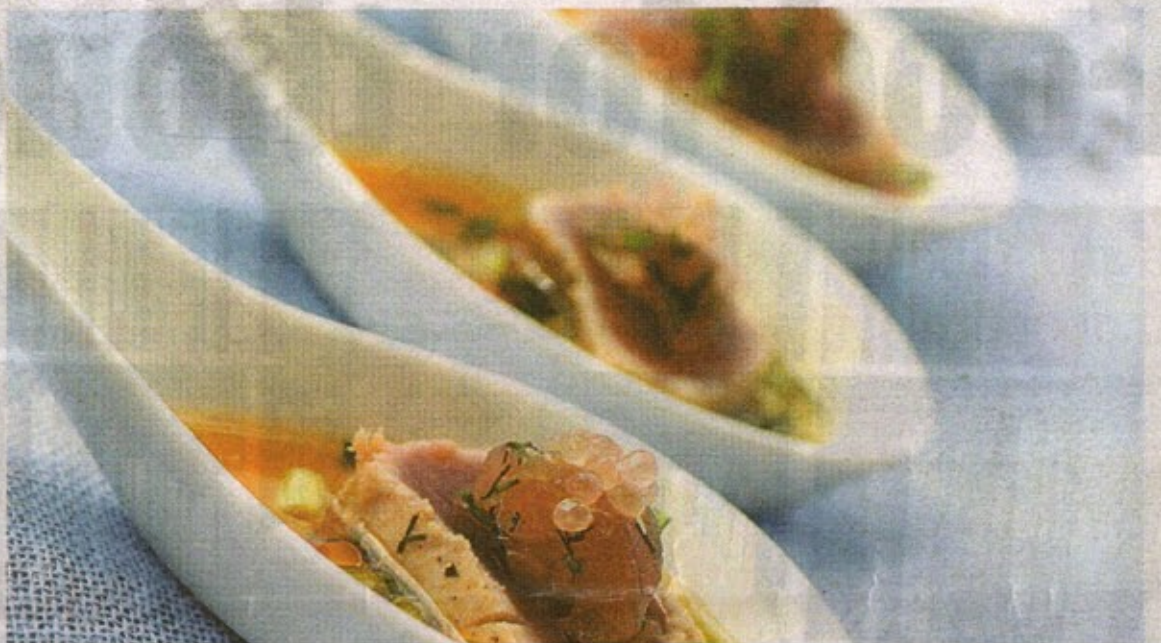
With no tolerance for the smell or taste of coffee, I had never had the desire to try tiramisu but I

I've been a fan of scallops for as long as I can remember. My father would stop by a fresh seafood outlet in Victoria on his way home from work sometimes and we'd cook up a whole batch for the two of us because no one else in the family was a fan.

But I've never quite been able to master them myself.

We learned the best way to pan fry scallops is to place them in a hot buttered pan in a clockwise direction.

When you return to the 12 o'clock position, you turn each one over and take them out once you reach the 12 again.



FOODIE FINDS: You can share in adventures in the kitchen at On the Ridge Cooking School.

### UPCOMING CLASSES

**March 30:** Coastal Catch – Seafood Delights

**April 13:** A French Odyssey – Journey through France

**April 27:** A Slice of the Hinterland – Autumn Leaves

**May 10:** Italianicious – Cooking with Passion

**May 24:** A French Odyssey – Journey through France

This gives them about a minute each side, which is all they need.

We dipped them in dukkah, a blend of nuts and spices, and served them with delicious lemon syrup.

I can't say I was too taken by the gazpacho with smoked paprika and garlic chives entrée but others at the table were rather impressed.

On the other hand, the seared tuna with tuna tartare, finger lime caviar and citrus chilli dressing was a taste explosion.

We learned during the class

about how to cut off the uneven parts of tuna but still incorporate them into the dish. We learned to

simply sear each edge of tuna to retain the delicate cell structure of the raw fish inside.

Tonya also showed us various cutting techniques to keep us savvy with the knife.

Gemma and I played a big role in the main dish, which was ocean fish en papillote served with a pine nut and lemon couscous and roasted cherry tomatoes.

We spent what seemed like forever preparing the accompanying herbed tomato salsa, which I have since successfully added to snapper using just my memory.

We certainly refined our cutting techniques and the brunoise dice (3mm by 3mm even squares) for an aesthetically pleasing salsa. While we left the skins on, we discarded all the seeds and pulp of the tomato, and any white structure inside the capsicum.

After Tonya sliced the fish into pieces, we layered it with the salsa and wrapped them up in baking



paper with our names.

There was a true sense of achievement when we sat ourselves down at the dinner table to consume the tantalising creations we had just spent hours preparing.

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