

buy  
right

eat  
well

with uncle chris

A BRIGHTON COUNCIL  
COMMUNITY INITIATIVE



## apricots

### THE TASTE OF SUMMER

Hello people. This is Uncle Chris writing to give you the best info on buying right and eating well! You'll be hearing from me four times a year, at the start of each season.

Apricots, cherries, peaches, nectarines ... these are a few of my favourite things. I could almost break into song! We are indeed blessed to have the best stone fruit in the world growing right here – in the orchards of Tasmania.

Every summer along our roadsides are stalls selling the freshest fruit ... and at the best price. The Coal Valley, especially, has an abundance of fruit on offer right through summer.

Apricots are my favourite. They are great when eaten fresh just minutes after being plucked from the trees. But there are so many wonderful ways to use them in cooking. They can be added to curries and chicken dishes. They are also great when sliced finely in salads. And they can be baked in the oven, with a little brown sugar and butter in the middle, for a scrumptious brekky. Apricot crumble is another favourite of mine.

Inside you'll read my recipe for apricot flan, a great alternative dessert to the traditional Christmas plum pudding. On this page I've given you an easy recipe for delicious apricot chutney. It goes well with cold meats and cheese, or try it alongside a curry.

Our apricot season runs from just before Christmas to early February and there are 10 varieties grown here. They're all great!

The best apricots are picked ripe – this way they have the best flavour. Fruit that is picked unripe stays just that – unripe. You'll know they are ripe by their fragrance and they are slightly soft to the touch.

You can of course buy them in the supermarkets, but the freshest and cheapest will be sold at nearby roadside stalls, especially in the Coal Valley. They will be selling from \$1.50 to \$3.50 a kilo, depending on quality.

One problem with apricots is that they don't store well. Eat them or use them in cooking as soon as you can. If you have to store them, do so in a paper bag in the fridge, but just for a few days at most. Don't put them in plastic bags.

And if you're eating them fresh off the tree, don't forget to wipe your chin!

## APRICOT chutney

800 g ripe apricots  
1 large onion chopped  
50 g sultanas  
150 g white or brown sugar  
100 ml white wine vinegar  
1 tablespoon coriander seeds  
½ teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon mustard seeds  
2 cloves

Halve or quarter apricots and discard blemishes and kernels.

Blend all ingredients, place in a saucepan and bring to the boil. Cook on low heat without lid on, stirring occasionally to avoid burning, for about 20 minutes until the mixture is soft.

While the chutney is still hot, spoon it into sterilised jars. Put on the sterilised lids, and leave jars upside down on a table until they are cold. Store the jars in a dark place, such as pantry or cupboard. Your home-made chutney will keep up to 6 months.

When a jar is opened, it can be kept in the fridge for up to two weeks.

### How to sterilise glass jars and lids:

Wash jars in hot soapy water, rinse well and drain upside down. Place in oven set at 120°C for 15 minutes remove from oven when cool enough to handle.

Lids should be cleaned, then gently boiled in water for 5 minutes and left to dry upside-down on a clean towel.

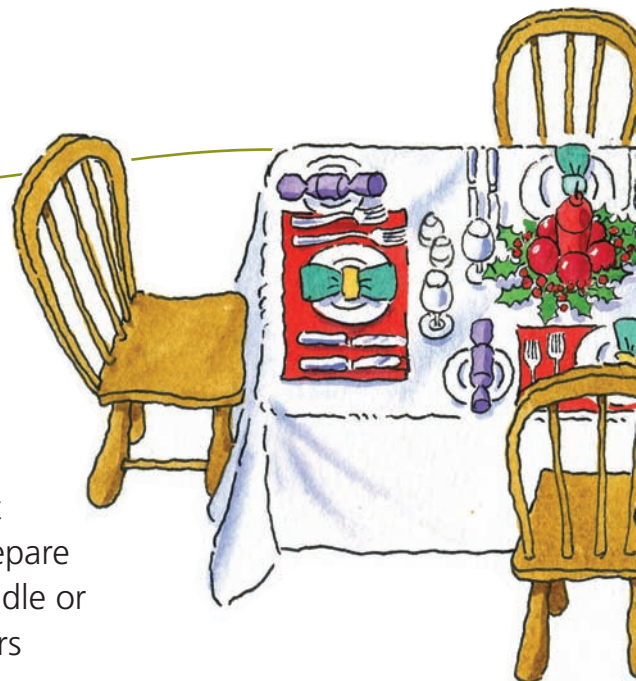
how to  
sterilise  
jars



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## a feast

FOR YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Have I got a Christmas dinner for you! In fact, it's a great three-course meal for any special occasion. It's easy to prepare and it's easy on the budget. Dress up the table with a candle or two and a bunch of local cherries or some summer flowers

### TOMATO tartlets

500 g puff pastry  
7 slices of ham  
3-4 large fleshy tomatoes  
olive oil

#### topping

150 g mascarpone or philly  
1 clove garlic crushed  
2 tablespoons chopped oregano  
½ bunch chopped parsley  
a touch of ground fresh pepper



Cut puff pastry into 14 equal squares and prick closely with a fork.  
Cover a large baking tray with baking paper and place the squares on it.

Cut slices of ham in half and place a slice on each pastry square, leaving an edge of about 2 cm.

Mix the topping ingredients together and spread on the ham.

Cut tomatoes in ½ cm slices and put one on each square.

Bake for 20 minutes in lower half of preheated oven at 180°C

Season with a little salt and pepper, drizzle a little olive oil over squares, garnish with some fresh oregano leaves and serve warm.

### ROSEMARY chicken

1.2 – 1.4 kg chicken  
4 small sprigs rosemary  
4 cloves garlic cut in half  
Put garlic and rosemary inside the chicken  
4 small sprigs rosemary are tied on top of the chicken with kitchen string (twine)

#### marinade

4 tablespoons finely chopped rosemary leaves  
4 crushed cloves garlic  
1 teaspoon salt  
pinch white pepper  
1 teaspoon paprika  
2 tablespoons olive oil

Mix the marinade ingredients and brush the chicken. Rest for 30 minutes.

Put in roasting pan with a whole garlic (cut across the cloves in half).

Preheat oven to 250°C, roast for 15 minutes in top half of oven.

Reduce heat to 180°C, roast for another 45 minutes in the middle of the oven.

Remove pan from oven, put chicken on a platter and keep warm in the switched off oven.

#### rosemary sauce

1 chicken stock cube,  
(dissolved in 100 ml water)  
250 ml dry white wine  
1 sprig rosemary

Place these in the roasting pan along with the residue from baking and reduce liquid by half on top of the stove.

75 g butter is slowly blended into the reduced liquid.

Pour sauce through a sieve and season with salt and pepper if necessary.

Serve the chicken and sauce with new potatoes and a green salad.

### POTATO salad

600 g boiled potatoes (pink eyes or dutch cream)  
Peel while still hot and cut in to 4 mm thick slices

150 ml of bouillon, beef or chicken cube dissolved in hot water and add 5 tablespoons wine vinegar.  
Mix the two liquids and pour over hot potatoes

#### dressing for potato salad

1 tablespoon mustard  
2 tablespoons Greek-style yoghurt  
2 tablespoons of your favourite mayonnaise  
Season with salt and pepper  
Mix well and add chopped parsley or chives  
Add to the seasoned potatoes, stir and serve

### APRICOT flan

shortcrust pastry  
150 g plain flour  
¼ teaspoon salt  
50 g cold butter  
75 ml water

In a bowl mix salt and flour, cut the cold butter into small cubes and rub the mixture between your hands until it looks like breadcrumbs. Slowly add water as needed and mix. Don't work dough too hard – that will make the dough tough. Cover dough tightly with plastic wrap and rest it in the fridge for at least 30 minutes.

Thinly spread flour on the preparation bench to prevent pastry from sticking. Roll out the pastry into a shape to fit your 28-30 cm tray.

Put tray in the fridge again to rest, while you prepare the apricots.

800 g fresh apricots cut in half and kernels removed [other seasonal fruit could be used].

Arrange with the cut side up on your



## xmas cookies

prepared tray, now make the custard filling.

### custard

200 ml pouring cream  
1 egg  
1 teaspoon corn flour  
4 tablespoons castor sugar  
Mix well with a whisk, pour over the apricots, sprinkle some extra sugar extra over the flan and bake in the bottom half of a pre-warmed oven at 220°C for 35-45 minutes or until brown.  
Take the flan out of the oven and put on a wire rack to cool.  
While still warm, remove the flan from the tray and let it cool down on the wire rack.  
Serve with whipped cream or ice cream.

You can substitute apricots with other fruit, depending on the season. Remember, buy fruit when it's fresh and plentiful.

350 g butter  
150 g castor or icing sugar  
pinch of salt  
½ teaspoon vanilla essence

Whisk butter until soft, then add sugar, salt and vanilla essence and whisk.

500 g plain flour is then added and mixed in to make a dough.

Form dough into a roll 4 cm diameter, wrap tightly in plastic wrap and cool in fridge.

When rested and firm, cut into 4 mm thick pieces and put on a baking tray covered with baking paper.

Bake in a preheated oven in the middle at 200°C for 10-15 minutes or till golden.

### icing:

150 g icing sugar  
1½ tablespoons lemon juice

Mix well and dip the cookies, while still warm, on one side and cool on a rack.

## herbs

### OLD FAVOURITES FOR BETTER FLAVOURS

As a general rule, fresh herbs taste better in food than dried herbs that are sold in jars or little packs.

Herbs are best when used soon after they are picked. If buying from a supermarket, make sure they have a good 'use by' date and that they have not been crushed or badly stored.

There are two varieties of **parsley** – curly and flat leaf. Avoid buying parsley with yellowing leaves and check their stems for freshness.

**Chives**, which usually are sold tightly wrapped in plastic, should not appear to be limp or have soggy leaves.

Chives and parsley in jars are not worth buying – much of their flavour has been lost in the drying process.

**Rosemary** (featured in my roast chicken recipe) is another herb which is best when fresh, and usually it is reasonably easy to find – in supermarkets and also growing in many gardens, because of its blue flowers in spring.

**Basil** discolours when put in the fridge. To keep it as fresh as possible, put the bunch in water like you do with flowers and place on kitchen shelf – it also keeps away the flies! You can also freeze basil: dry it on kitchen paper, dip it in oil, place in a plastic bag and keep in the freezer. Use when still frozen.

### To keep herbs in the fridge

Make sure the fresh herbs are dry, pack them loosely in a plastic bag, blow some air into the bag, tie off and put into the vegetable compartment of your fridge.

### To keep herbs in the freezer

Whole sprigs of herbs can be put in bags and frozen. When needed, just rub the frozen leaves between your fingers and add to what you are cooking.

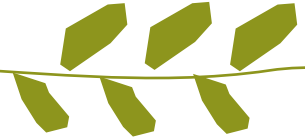
### OR

Pluck the leaves and put them in portions in ice cube trays with some water or bouillon and add frozen to your soup or sauces

### OR

Finely chop herbs in small container, freeze them and add frozen to the dish you are cooking.

- Check out the fridge magnet for some of my favourite herbs.



## grow your own

Want to slash your greengrocer bills? Of course, we all do.

Start your own backyard vegie patch and you will, and you'll have fun doing it.

Follow a few simple guidelines and you will be growing fresh, healthy vegies in just weeks.

Most vegetables require four things – good drainage, well fertilised soil, plenty of sun and regular watering.

Start by finding a spot that gets maximum sun. Ideally it will be somewhere protected from strong

winds and not in a low part where water might collect.

If you don't have an obvious spot, start growing vegies in pots or polystyrene vegie boxes. You'll be amazed just how much you can grow.

If you do have space, mark out a bed with string and pegs (4m long by 1m wide would be ideal) and start digging.

Aim to create a bed of crumbly soil to a depth of about 1½ times the length of the blade of the spade.

Next, dig in some compost. This adds goodness to the soil and improves its ability to grow things. If you can lay your hands on some well rotted cow or sheep manure you're in luck – or you might need to buy a bag of compost from your local nursery.

Once you get going you can start producing your own free compost from grass clippings and kitchen scraps (we'll talk about that in the next mailout).

Most vegie gardens also benefit from the addition of lime (calcium oxide) to "sweeten" the soil. It's a white powder and you can buy it quite cheaply at a garden centre.

Sprinkle it over the soil surface (about a handful to a square metre). It will wash into the soil so don't worry about digging it in.

You can grow from seedlings, but you will save money by buying packets of seeds.

If growing in pots, old containers, buckets or even large tin cans will do. Make sure there are drainage holes in the bottom (most plants don't like wet feet) and use potting mix, not ordinary soil.

Different crops grow at different times of the year. Check with your nursery to see what you can grow now. Or look at the sowing times printed on the back of the seed packets.

You can team up with a neighbour and each grow different vegies so you can swap some of yours for ones you don't grow, and vice versa.

For some more ideas, visit the vegetable garden at Hobart's Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens – it will get you inspired.



## ACTION plan

- Don't be too fussy. It is far better to have a few blemishes on your vegies than to have perfect-looking crops that have been subjected to possibly harmful chemicals.

- Mulching helps prevent soils from drying out. Lucerne hay is a good mulch and you can often get a bale or two cheaply. Layer it 6-10cm over your vegie patch, then dig it in after your crops have finished (it will improve the soil). And check round your neighbourhood for free mulches. Good mulches include pea straw, decayed autumn leaves, shredded newspaper (not too thickly), woodchips (add some fertiliser because the chips will rob nitrogen from the soil) and old pinebark.

- Rotate the position in which you grow particular crops from year to year. This prevents disease setting in and helps avoid stunted crops.

- Weed regularly. A little weeding often will keep things under control. Weeds in a vegetable garden mean crops must share nutrients.

- Stagger plantings. The aim is to grow crops on a continuous basis, not to have a glut. Prune unhealthy growth and destroy.

- Never water when temperatures are high.
- Avoid vegetable seeds or seedlings coming into direct contact with fresh manure as burning can occur.
- Don't spray vast quantities of liquid fertiliser on your plants. It is expensive and what the plants don't use will quickly leach from your vegie patch.

plant  
now





## From Brighton Mayor Tony Foster OAM JP To the residents of the Municipality of Brighton

I am proud to announce an exciting new program for residents of Brighton municipality – Buy Right, Eat Well. With this letter comes the first of a series of informative mailouts to help members of our community achieve the twin goals of better household budgeting and healthy eating.

We Tasmanians are indeed fortunate to have on our very doorsteps some of the best foods grown anywhere in the world. Certainly in the case of fruit and vegetables, our produce is seasonal.

Therefore, the mailouts such as the one you received with this letter will be sent to your home at the beginning of each season.

Each Buy Right, Eat Well mailout will feature a local identity – Uncle Chris. He is Chris Stucki, a well-known chef who until recently ran Stucki's Farmhouse Restaurant in Tea Tree. Each season Chris will talk about what local produce to buy – when it's plentiful and cheap – and what to do with it in your kitchen.

The mailouts will be illustrated by George Haddon, named Australia's Cartoonist of the Year in 2004. Recently George won third prize in an international cartoonists' competition for the cartoon featured in this letter – as you can see from the topic, George has a keen appreciation of fresh food!

Each mailout will also contain information on kitchen gardens – how to set them up, what to plant. It's a great way to ease pressure on the household budget, while having pleasure in eating what you have grown. This information will be written by gardening expert Tony Fawcett.



Accompanying each mailout will be an informative fridge magnet to help guide you on your cooking journey. The first fridge magnet features herbs to give your cooking that zing.

Buy Right, Eat Well with Uncle Chris will encourage us all each season – beginning with this summer – to seek what's close at hand, plentiful and cheap.

Tasmania is blessed with the best stone fruit in the world – cherries, peaches, nectarines, plums. And, of course, apricots! From just before Christmas to early February there will be apricots aplenty in Tasmania – and some of the very best are produced virtually an apricot stone's throw from us.

One of the biggest apricot growers in Australia is Qew orchards in Fingerpost Rd, Campania. With 48,000 trees producing 10 different varieties of apricots, Qew needs up to 300 pickers and packers over that six-week period. Traditionally around one-third of the temporary workers have come from Brighton municipality, so some of our neighbours have first-hand knowledge of the quality of fruit they are picking and packing.

At any time during the harvesting season you can buy from orchard roadside stalls – excellent value for money and giving you exciting options back in the kitchen.

So join Uncle Chris on the journey – Buy Right, Eat Well!

buy  
right

eat  
well

with uncle chris



## my top 10 herbs



### **basil**

Basil is used fresh; cooking destroys the flavour.

**Goes well with:** garlic, tomatoes, pasta, grilled meat and vegetables, salads, zucchini, eggplants, capsicums.

### **bay leaf**

Dried bay leaf is more intense in flavour than fresh off the tree. Keep in a dry area or hang the clusters on twine and use as required.

**Goes well with:** potatoes, onions, lentils, poultry, casseroles, soups.

### **chives**

Use fresh. Add after meal is prepared or as a garnish.

**Goes well with:** salads, eggs, mayonnaise, mushrooms, soft cheeses, new potatoes, peas.

### **coriander**

Pungent flavour. Add near end of cooking or as a garnish.

**Goes well with:** Stir-fries, curries, fish, potatoes, carrots, spinach, tomatoes, cauliflower, rice.

### **mint**

Use fresh, loses flavour when heated too long.

**Goes well with:** peas, new potatoes, salads, lamb, carrots, fruits.

### **oregano**

Best when fresh. Put in a whole sprig while cooking, but beware – flavour gets stronger while cooking.

**Goes well with:** home-made pizzas, smoked fish or meat, zucchini, eggplants, olives, capers, garlic, beans.

### **parsley**

Two varieties: curly leaf and flat leaf (or Italian). Curly leaf is more intense in flavour. Flat leaf looks like coriander, but is totally different in flavour.

**Goes well with:** salads, potatoes, carrots, tomatoes, beans, pasta, eggs.

### **rosemary**

Use as whole sprigs (discard before eating) or finely chopped up.

**Goes well with:** chicken, lamb, potatoes, pasta, polenta, lentils.

### **sage**

Use fresh. To enhance flavour, fry in olive oil.

**Goes well with:** pasta, zucchini, fish, liver, lamb, duck, potatoes.

### **thyme**

Preferably use fresh; if using whole sprigs remove when cooking ends.

**Goes well with:** fish, poultry, lamb, mushrooms, potatoes, pasta, tomatoes, capsicum, home-made pizzas.