

BITES

Pack a punch

IT WILL set the senses spinning, is a member of the mustard family, is native to Japan and is being grown in northern Tasmania. No prizes for guessing — it's the real deal fresh wasabi, harvested to order and to your door the next day (Express Post permitting).

Shima Wasabi packs include stems, leaves and leaf stalks, can be stored in the fridge for a week and are guaranteed to fire up the palate. Glossy leaves or crunchy chopped stalks put a new spin on garnish and, for that traditional fine green stem paste, you'll need to get grating. To achieve the smooth texture and authentic flavour, a "grind and mix" grater is essential. Sharkskin is the preference in Japan but Shima offer an alternative in the form of graters made from Tasmanian hardwood with a synthetic abrasive.



GAIL THOMAS

Shima Wasabi: indulgence pack \$59.90; dinner party pack \$89.90 (also restaurant and food service supplies). Wooden graters: small \$39; large \$89. Phone 0417 519 093 or visit shimawasabi.com.au.

Cordially yours

FINDING a non-alcoholic drink that is neither fizzy nor full of chemicals can be a tough ask but these delightful citrus cordials fit the bill. For almost a decade, Lavender's Green has produced lemon and lime cordial in New Zealand, only recently exporting to Australia. Forget the nasty jaw-sticking syrups of yesteryear. These pretty blue bottles contain mild and subtly-flavoured concoctions, using finely grated zest for added zing. The lemon and limes are hand-squeezed and organically grown on an old farm in Wairarapa; the fruit is juiced within hours of being plucked from the citrus grove. Add to a glass of mineral water with crushed ice for a refreshing drink, or, if you change your mind about the booze, mix with vodka, gin or tequila for an alcoholic twist. Also works well poaching seasonal fruit, such as quince or stone fruit.

TESSIE VANDERWERT

Lemon and lime cordial by Lavender's Green, \$16.95 from The Essential Ingredient, Prahran; Darriwill Farm, Brighton, Ivanhoe and Canterbury; Toscano's, Kew. lavendersgreen.co.nz.



Love your butcher

READERS are passionate about their butchers — Richard Cornish's cover story (Epicure, July 14) generated a big response. Reader Judy Binks says her mother always said you must have a "love affair with your butcher".

Highly commended butchers included: Sandy Leatham of Hook & Spoon in Benalla; David Dargaville at Bendigo's Flora Hill Quality Meats; Bill Woolnough of Bill's at Belgrave; Nick Hill at Butcherboy in Moorabbin; the James family, owners of Keilor Continental Butchers; Andrew's Choice in Yarraville; and Dave and Jo Ibbs at North Essendon Gourmet Butchery.

And for those with a DIY bent, reader Ron Wallas recommends sausage-making classes at the Centre for Adult Education. The course is taken by Sarah Grace, who draws on her Italian heritage. Course includes recipes, fillings and equipment information. Cost is \$89. www.cae.edu.au



Correction

THE Henry Langdon Sea Salt Rubs featured in Bites (July 14), cost \$9.95 not \$6.95 as published.

DIARY

**AUGUST 1
Noble and nosh**

TOAST the 25th anniversary of Noble One dessert wine with a two-course wine-matched dinner and Noble One tastings, including the as-yet-unreleased 1981 vintage. De Bortoli Yarra Valley Estate, 58 Pinnacle Lane, Dixons Creek. \$160, 6pm. Phone 5965 2271.

**AUGUST 4
Pinot push**

WINEMAKERS from New Zealand such as Carrick, Valli Vineyards and Olssens will showcase their pinot noir at a Silk Road duck degustation dinner. Cost is \$130. Bookings essential on 9329 4243.

**AUGUST 4
Truffle kerfuffle**

INDULGE in a decadent truffle dinner at The Brasserie by Philippe Mouchel. Five truffle-laden courses are expertly matched with premium Victorian and French wines. Riverside at Crown. \$180, 7pm. Phone 9292 7808.

**AUGUST 8-9
Sweet dream**

THE Chocolate Rush Festival features chocolatiers, a market and classes. Melbourne Showgrounds, Epsom Road, Ascot Vale. \$25/\$15. Phone 1300 737 363.

ANNABEL ROSS

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Editor's letter

REMEMBER chimeneas? Those cumbersome clay fireplaces from Mexico that, despite being really ugly, were all the rage in Melbourne backyards a few years ago. Great for warming the hands during silly spells of alfresco entertaining on chillier nights but for toasting or baking anything more substantial than a marshmallow or a jaffle? Hopeless. Enter the wood-fired pizza oven, a rustic reminder of the Mediterranean that produces much more than the Italian staple. Roasts, sourdough bread, piping-hot curries, puddings and steaks are now emerging from one of the earliest ovens known to man. Our cover story on page 4 meets local enthusiasts who have either built one from scratch or used a kit. There's a hearty winter recipe and details about how to get started. But be warned, classes on do-it-yourself construction are hugely popular and the CAE reports you'll need to wait until the end of October for a vacancy.



VERONICA RIDGE