

Eat out in style this summer with alfresco food from Tom Aikens



Tom's off Down Under this month

I'LL be spending part of my summer holiday in Sydney, Australia, this year—it'll be my first time there and I'm so looking forward to it.

I've been asked to be a judge for an important restaurant event, the Lexus Appetite for Excellence (LAFE) Awards. I'll be involved with a panel session, with two leading Australian chefs, to discuss entrepreneurs in the restaurant industry (visit www.restaurantevents.com.au). and presenting the LAFE event and

giving the 2008 winners their awards. I'll also be giving a talk on restaurants in the UK.

Then, on August 12, I'll be co-hosting a dinner with Luke Mangan and Tony Bilson for *Vogue Entertaining+Travel*, which is Australia's most prestigious food and travel magazine. I'll be designing one of the menu's three courses for a dinner at Bilson's (www.bilsons.com.au) and, on the night, I'll have to eat my own food—there's a first time for everything! Then, on August 13, I'll be designing the menu and cooking at another event. But of course, there will also be the chance to eat someone else's fabulous food.

I've had a lot of Australian chefs working in the kitchen with me, and they've always been a light-hearted bunch. I hope to get a lot from the trip and to see the standards in the industry there—and perhaps even to poach a few staff for my restaurants!

August is a time for barbeques and picnics and eating alfresco, so this month's recipes will be perfect: a cold soup and a simple mullet salad.

Find out what's cooking at Tom's restaurants at www.tomaikens.co.uk

Red mullet niçoise

Serves four

- 4 x 100g red mullet fillets
- 300g French green beans, topped and tailed
- 80g finely chopped shallots
- 40g pitted black olives, cut in half
- 40g pitted green olives, cut in half
- 12 medium-sized Charlotte potatoes
- 12 pickled anchovy fillets
- 16 pieces oven-dried plum tomatoes
- 4 boiled eggs peeled and cut in quarters
- Dijon mustard and white-wine vinaigrette
- 80g mini capers

For the French beans

Once the beans are prepped, take a good size pan, add water and salt, bring the water to the boil, add the beans to the water and cook for three minutes to blanch them quickly, so they retain their crispness. Place them immediately into iced water to cool. Once cool, drain them in a colander and dry them on a kitchen towel.

For the potatoes

Wash the potatoes in cold water first, then put them in a pot with some salted water. Bring to a simmer and cook the potatoes for about 25 minutes until slightly soft. Remove from the heat, drain the water and leave the potatoes on the side to cool.

Cut them in half lengthways and then in half again, and put to one side until you're ready to mix the salad.

For the oven-dried tomatoes

- 4 vine plum tomatoes
- 250g cherry tomatoes on the vine
- 8g garlic, finely sliced or on a mandolin
- 2g chopped thyme
- 150ml olive oil
- 4g coarse sea salt
- 1g milled black pepper
- 12g icing sugar
- ½tsp chopped rosemary



Cut the plum tomatoes into quarters and half the cherry tomatoes in half width-ways across; leave the other half whole with the stalk on. Put all of the tomatoes onto a tray with baking parchment paper or greaseproof paper.

Mix the rest of the ingredients together and then sprinkle it all over the tomatoes. Cook in the oven at 90–100°C for 90 minutes.

For the vinaigrette

- 80g chopped shallots

Food in season for August

Guacamole

- 800g diced avocado
- 125g finely diced red onion
- 225g tomato concasse
- 30g chopped coriander
- 1 green jalapeño pepper, finely chopped
- 90g olive oil
- 60g lime juice
- 3g sugar

10g salt

Few

drops

Tabasco

Dice the avocados and mash them coarsely in a bowl with the lime juice. Add the rest of the ingredients. Serve as a dip with raw vegetables and tortilla crisps.



Blackcurrants

Blackberries

Raspberries

Strawberries

Courgette and

marrows

Plums

Sweet corn

Pumpkins and

squash

French beans

Runner beans

Cherries

Greengages

Hare

Crayfish

John Dory

Peppers

Aubergines

Samphire

Tomatoes

Cherry tomatoes

Redcurrants

Grouse



1 clove garlic, finely chopped
 80g Dijon mustard
 60g honey
 30g sugar
 1g salt
 6 turns of fresh ground black pepper
 90ml white-wine vinegar
 180ml vegetable oil
 80ml olive oil
 30ml double cream
 Whisk the mustard, honey, vinegar, double cream, shallots, sugar, salt and pepper together, then slowly whisk in the two oils until the vinaigrette is emulsified.

For the boiled eggs

4 free-range or organic eggs
 Place a medium-sized pan of water on the stove and bring to the boil, then, with a slotted spoon, carefully place the eggs one by one into the water and cook for nine minutes. Remove the eggs and put them under cold running water.

When they're cold, carefully peel off the shell, using a sharp, thin-bladed knife, and then cut the eggs into quarters. Dip the knife into water or wipe it with

a damp cloth to prevent the knife from sticking to the egg when cutting it in half or in quarters.

To make the salad

Put the potatoes, green beans, chopped shallots, green and black olives and mini capers into a large bowl, then season with salt and pepper, and add the vinaigrette.

Toss this all together carefully and then place in a large salad bowl. On top of the mixed salad, add the quarters of egg, and anchovy fillets.

For the grilled red mullet

60ml olive oil
 1 clove garlic finely chopped
 2g picked thyme
 1 lemon zest and juice
 Sea salt and pepper

Mix all the above ingredients together and brush it onto the red mullet. Season with salt and pepper, put the fish under a hot grill and cook for three minutes on one side, then flip over and cook the other side.

Once it's cooked, drizzle a little vinaigrette on top of the fish. Leave to cool slightly and serve with the niçoise salad.



Fine cherry tomato gazpacho

70g red onions
 1 clove of garlic
 10 red peppers chopped
 2 cucumbers, peeled, deseeded and chopped
 3 litres cherry vine tomatoes, without the vine or stalk
 50g icing sugar
 22g coarse sea salt
 5g ground black pepper
 20g tomato paste
 400ml olive oil

750 ml of tomato juice
 6 sprigs of picked basil
 6 sprigs each of picked coriander and tarragon
 Mix all above ingredients together and purée in the blender until very smooth, then pass through a fine sieve. Serve this with some fresh tomato dice and a little chopped black olive, then a drizzle of olive oil.

For more alfresco recipes, visit www.countrylife.co.uk/tomaikens