

A PASSION FOR FOOD

MOST KIWIS LIKE TO THINK OF THEMSELVES AS A BIT OF A WHIZ ON THE BARBIE, BUT WITH 14 BOOKS AND NUMEROUS INTERNATIONAL AWARDS UNDER HER BELT, JULIE BIUSO IS THE REAL DEAL.

Julie's latest book, *Never-ending Summer*, recently won the award for the best Barbecue Book in New Zealand in the Gourmand World Cook Book Awards.

She says the casual and relaxed approach New Zealanders take to summer cooking has cemented the barbecue in our cooking culture.

"It's sensible. The mess stays outside and you're out with your guests. We're also getting a lot more adventurous about what we cook on the barbecue."

She says she's excited by the direction New Zealand food is taking.

"There's just so much innovation and we're not held back by tradition. I also think there's a huge trend towards growing your own and that's a really good thing."

The cook turned food journalist has always loved cooking, even as a young girl.

"We grew a lot of our own food – everyone knew where their food came from and was involved with it, so cooking was just a part of that."

"I think there's a huge trend towards growing your own and that's a really good thing."

Her first foray into cooking was a batch of hot cross buns. "I took them home from school and Mum said 'Wow, you're our official hot cross bun maker'. I was pretty pleased with myself about that. Of course the next year I made them and they were a dismal flop – they were hard little rocks."

From the age of 13 Julie worked in restaurants, and at just 16 years-old she went overseas for the first time.

"I wanted to go to France. At intermediate school my teacher used to talk about the cheeses and baguettes and so it just painted this amazing picture of France."

As she travelled around Europe she became aware of food and how different it was to what was available in New Zealand,



and when she returned home she applied, and was accepted, to The Cordon Bleu School in London.

It was in Italy that she met her husband Remo and fell in love with all things Italian.

"In terms of Italian food, there's typically a very short ingredient list – only four or five and you can taste each one.

It's very quick cooking and usually the ingredients are readily at hand."

Back home in New Zealand, Julie became the head teacher at The Cordon Bleu School in Auckland before opening her own cookery school, La Dolce Vita, in Lower Albert Street.

Since that time she has become one of the country's leading food journalists, having written for a number of publications including 'Taste' and 'Your Home and Garden' magazines, as well as having spots on numerous radio and TV shows.

"To me it's not a career that was planned – food and love of writing came together."

She also enjoys spending time at Mangawhai, where her husband Remo runs the Bennetts Gelateria.

"I'm more of a savoury girl – he's definitely the one with the sweet tooth! Italians are

very good at making gelato and ice cream, so it was natural for him to open the business."

Julie's top three BBQ tips

1 Resist the temptation to constantly move meat around. Leave it alone. Don't prod, poke, stir or turn unnecessarily. If you interfere and forcibly try to pry stuck meat off the hot plate, you'll tear the fibres, making it stringy, and ruin the surface of the meat.

2 Don't overload the barbecue grill rack or hot plate because it will trap juices around the food, making them steam rather than sizzle. It also makes it difficult to turn over delicate items.

3 It's much easier to clean a gas grill while it's still hot. The best way I know to clean it is to splash a cup of water onto the plate, then scrape it clean. Dry it off with a piece of towel kept for the purpose. Even burnt sugar or stuck-on gunk will come off this way.

Julie's outfit was provided by Annah Stretton

Recipes are extracted from Julie Biuso's *Never-ending Summer*, published by New Holland. Photography by Aaron McLean.

Fattoush

Serves: 4

Time to prep: 20 minutes

Time to cook: None

Bread is a great addition to a salad, especially if it's crunchy. It may not be authentic to toast the bread for this Lebanese salad, but it tastes so much nicer! Extend the salad by adding canned or barbecued fresh tuna or other barbecued fish or chicken fillets.

1 small red onion, peeled and sliced

2 large pita breads

3 tbsp olive oil

½ telegraph cucumber, peeled and chopped, or 2 Lebanese cucumbers, chopped

2 radishes, trimmed and sliced

1 medium-sized carrot, peeled and sliced

1 white stalk celery, well washed and sliced

1 small cos lettuce or 120g cos lettuce leaves, washed, dried and torn into bite-sized pieces

2 tbsp chopped mint

2 tbsp chopped flat-leaf parsley

12 ripe cherry tomatoes, halved

DRESSING

2 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed

2 tbsp lemon juice

1 tsp sumac

5 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

¼ tsp salt

¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper

¼ tsp allspice

1. Soak red onion in icy cold water for 15 minutes. Drain and pat dry with paper towels.
2. Split pita breads open and brush both sides with oil. Put them on a tray and bake in an oven preheated to 180°C for 5–7 minutes until golden.
3. Put red onion in a large bowl with cucumber, radishes, carrot, celery, cos lettuce, herbs and tomatoes.
4. To make the dressing, put all the ingredients in a small bowl and mix together. Pour over salad and toss thoroughly. Break pita bread into bite-sized pieces and add to salad. Toss lightly and serve immediately.

JULIE'S WINE RECOMMENDATION

"A chilled rosé or a Sauvignon Blanc. They'll also be good with the Fattoush if you add tuna or grilled chicken."



Fattoush



Fish Kebabs

Fish kebabs on warm tomatoes

Serves: 3-4 (Makes 12)

Time to prep: 15 minutes

Time to cook: 7 minutes

The briny taste of green olives goes well with avocado oil and is offset with the sweet taste of tomatoes and peppery anise flavour of basil. The kebabs can be skewered several hours ahead. Serve them with crusty bread and a rocket salad.

2 lemons

500g skinned and boned gurnard fillets (or any other firm-textured fish that will hold together well)

1 cup pimiento-stuffed green olives, drained

12 fresh bay leaves

Olive oil, plus extra for hot plate

2 tbsp extra virgin avocado or olive oil

12 smallish vine tomatoes

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

½ cup basil leaves

12 bamboo skewers, soaked in cold water for 30 minutes

1. Cut the peel off lemons in long thick strips. Peel fish and pat dry with paper towels. Cut fish into cubes about the same size as the olives. Thread fish

on skewers with olives, bay leaves and strips of lemon peel. Lay the kebabs in a dish and drizzle with a little olive oil.

2. Cook fish kebabs on a preheated oiled barbecue hot plate over medium heat until fish is lightly browned and just cooked through; do not overcook. Alternatively, cook kebabs in a ridged grill pan over medium heat.
3. Meanwhile, put avocado or olive oil in a large frying pan. Halve the tomatoes and lay them cut side down in the pan. Season with sea salt and pepper. Set the pan over low heat and let them warm through for about 5 minutes, until they show signs of softening. (The pan of tomatoes could also be warmed through over the barbecue hot plate if you wish to do all the cooking outside.) Slide tomatoes onto a large serving platter, or individual plates, scatter over basil and top with the hot kebabs. Serve immediately.

JULIE'S WINE RECOMMENDATION

"A Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Gris. There are so many options!"