



'Roo on a rock

SHANE GIVES US THE LOW-DOWN WHILE MARTIN TUCKS IN.

What we have here is typical of the way our people cooked around here. The women would heat up a rock, and then they'd come along having collected dilly bags full of food and pour it onto the heated rock. It would take a few days to heat up a large piece of granite. So it's a feast occasion. After they'd poured out the contents of what they'd collected onto the rock, they then let it cook in its own juices and its own flavours, and the result would be much like what we have here. This is a modern version of a timeless method of cooking.

Today we have kangaroo and prawn. Obviously the prawns come from down the coast, and the kangaroos locally farmed. The food is sitting on a piece of granite that's heated to 400 degrees Celsius. It's quite remarkable.

The flavours are very different to what you'd expect when they're cooked on a hot rock.

There's a bit of salt on the rock itself to stop the steak or the meat from stick-

Helen and Tom Blacka recently held a test dinner at Tombarra in preparation for the real deal during the 'Quilt Weekend' in November. Local Aboriginal elder and gastronome Shane Mortimer explains hot rock cooking

ing onto the rock, but that's the only reason it's used. It's not actually used as a seasoning, per se. We have some mountain pepper here to use on the 'roo, which is just superb, because it's also a local plant with provenance to this area.

Our dinner here is made from food that's sourced in the local region, and it's quite something. We may end up having some oysters.

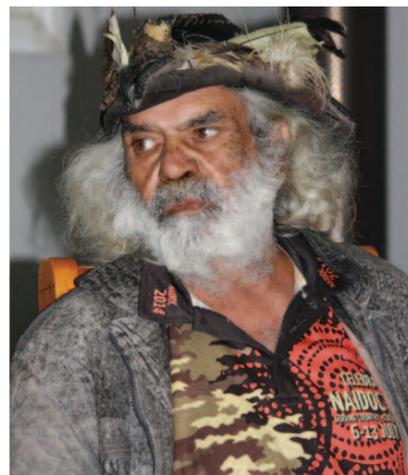
Oysters on the hot rock aren't shucked, they're quite amazing because you put them on the rock and they just open themselves. Then the flavour, the flavour really jumps at you. It's quite something.

Of course there are a couple of veggies on the side and some dipping sauces. It depends on what you want. In terms of food that has provenance, we have plenty here. There are all sorts of options you can have to accompany the meat that's cooking.

You can have fish; salmon on the rock is astounding. Just about any white flesh meat is good too. Chicken is very very good on the rock.

Deer are becoming a big pest and deer

MARBK.



on the rock would be sensational. Absolutely wonderful. The more the better, get rid of them.

There's no point killing an animal unless you're going to actually do something with it.

Crocodile is amazing, and emu on the rock is just astounding. Yeah. This is a real step forward in cooking, rather than a step back. The kangaroo can't step backwards, neither can the emu. So it's a progressive dinner.

Martin Royds provides the view of a local farmer

Kangaroos are in plague proportions and they're being shot and wasted. We're wanting to turn them into products that can be eaten or worn. Following on from a forum that was held by Landcare in Bungendore last week, we're looking at how to manage kangaroos.

We're looking at how to prepare and eat them and the benefits of eating free-range meat.

That's why we invited to Tombarra, Shane Mortimer, a leading aboriginal elder in this area, Marbk, last full-blood of his tribe and Teabag, cook extraordinaire to the Sydney Olympics and the Aboriginal Embassy in Canberra.

Shane opened Tombarra; he was the guy who did 'Welcome to Country'.

On the 'Airing of the Quilts' weekend in November, starting on Friday night 23rd, we're going to have a workshop dinner on how to cook kangaroo meat and its benefits. Then Saturday night, we're going to have a celebratory dinner of eating wild game caught in the Braidwood area.

There'll be kangaroo, deer, rabbit, maybe some prawns and oysters from the south coast.

Tombarra now has a hot rocks oven which was designed and manufactured by Shane Mortimer. It's got the capacity to heat a hundred hot rocks at a time. They're slabs of granite like one of the cooking methods used by Indigenous people where fire was added over rock, then you grab the fire off and cook on the hot rock.

At Tombarra the hot rocks are heated using solar power during the day, and because they maintain their heat, we need only a minimal amount of elec-

MUCH ADO ABOUT KANGAROO



MARBK, TOM BLACKA, MARTIN, TEABAG, TIM WIMBORNE AND SHANE.

tricity to keep them up to temperature of 400°C. We've found that they've stayed warm enough for four days.

Then they come out on the rock plates, sprinkled with some Himalayan rock salt that stops the meat from sticking to the hot plate. The hot rocks come out of the oven, the meat gets placed on the hot rock, seared on one side, turned over, and then delivered to the table. The diner can then cook it according to

how they like it, rare, medium or whatever.

The idea is to use as much native food as possible — all local food. We're working with other locals who produce native or healthy foods, like Tim Wimborne with his native peppers. They go really well with the kangaroo and the deer and so we're putting his salted native pepper onto the rock before you watch your dinner cook.

TOMBARRA Accommodation & Events

Aboriginal Hot Rock Cuisine

Friday November 23rd

'Roo on the Rock with accompanying talk \$35 pp

Saturday November 24th

Sizzling local seafood, kangaroo and venison feast \$65 pp with local wines

Prepared by Aboriginal Embassy chef Teabag

Starts at 6.30 pm with a platypus walk and discussion about local foods

Special deals for two the nights available • Numbers are limited

BOOKINGS: 0497 638 631

579 Northangera Road, Mongarlowe
tombarra1@bigpond.com www.tombarra.com.au