

food&drink

Books to buy for cooks



ELAINE REEVES
bites

'Tis the season for some suggestions for cookbook Christmas gifts – in order of degree of difficulty, from read-and-weep to basic how-to guidance.

FEW of us will attempt to execute the food in *Origin: The Food of Ben Shewry*, (Murdoch Books \$95) which is at the very haute end of cuisine, but as Shewry says in his introduction it is part story book and part picture book and he hopes people will read it from cover to cover.

As a New Zealand farm boy living with resourceful parents, Shewry is quite aware of where food comes from.

There are stories and pictures of waiting for whitebait on the banks of the river, his thoughts on food labelling and of how he took chocolate off the menu at Attica in Melbourne until he found an ethical supplier.

I may find myself trying some of his ideas – boiling kale or parsley in sea water, cooking pineapple in a salt crust – but I won't be reproducing all the steps to make white chocolate pukeko eggs served in a nest of swamp grass. But that is no reason not to cherish this beautiful book – you can follow the



RECIPES TO INSPIRE: Some of the wide range of cookbooks ideal for Christmas gift giving.

score without attempting your own virtuoso performance.

Persia conjures up images of nightingales, roses and poetry, but Iran has a much bleaker image. They are, of course, the same place and in *Pomegranates and Roses* (Simon & Schuster \$39.99) Ariana Bundy passes on the family recipes used to hold an Iranian family together in New York.

As well as the title foods, Persia/

Iran is home to caviar, saffron and pistachios. It's a very elegant book of food designed for four seasons; food of recipes from people who devoted time and care to cooking.

Stefano de Pieri has worked in the same kitchen for 20 years and grants he, like most emigres, probably is more traditional than Italian chefs in Italy.

Jim McDougall did his apprenticeship with De Pieri, then

worked with Shannon Bennett in Melbourne for six years, before returning to Mildura – and shaking things up.

Together they have written *Nuovo Mondo* (Hardie Grant \$49.95). Often they give their take on the same dish – bolognese sauce, baked chicken or quail ravioli from De Pieri and quail and cabbage dumplings from McDougall.

Not all the innovations are

McDougall's – De Pieri cooks spaghetti like a risotto and uses a chocolate stout in place of coffee in a tiramisu.

Haute peasant cooking might describe *My Basque Cuisine* (New Holland Publishers \$40) by Ash Mair, a Launceston boy who last year won the *UK MasterChef: The Professionals*.

He puts the basics, such as romesco sauce and preparing salt cod, at the beginning of the book before moving to tapas and through to, mostly milky, desserts.

It is sunny food bright with red capsicum and other peppers, saffron and vibrant green vegetables. Paella is there but what could be more Spanish than white bean stew with chorizo morcilla (black pudding) and pancetta, a dish so popular you can buy canned versions throughout Spain.

Callum Hann won this year's *MasterChef All Stars*, but his book *The Starter Kitchen* (Murdoch Books \$24.99) is not in the least cheffy. It is based largely on his experience of passing on cooking knowledge to two flatmates.

"I have tried to write the recipes in the way that I would explain them to someone standing next to me," he says.

He begins with a good run-down on equipment shopping, using a knife and such, then goes into recipes under headings such as "just like mum makes" (roast chicken with real gravy).

He does cooking for crowds, food that's fast to prepare and food to grab and eat as you go.

Victoria Heywood's *Good Cook Bad Cook* (Slattery Media Group \$24.95) is another good primer.

For each of the 80 recipes it contains, she also tells you what could make them go seriously wrong.

It covers basics other books would assume you know, such as scrambling and poaching eggs and cooking fresh and dry pasta and cooking sausages, along with handy standbys such as scones, macaroni cheese and hollandaise sauce.

Look back at best-value wine buys

THIS week we conclude my look back to the wines that have impressed me as the best-value buys over the last six months.

Four-star wines \$45 and under

Holyman 2010 Pinot Noir \$45: Lovely depth of colour with lifted black cherry and meaty, gamey aromas, the fuller-bodied palate nicely balanced, complex and concentrated with a savoury forest, charcuterie and herbal rather than fruity intensity, smooth and firmly structured with lovely supple tannins providing a long, nicely dry finish. 14.0 pc
www.stoneyrise.com

Brand's Laira 2009 Blockers Cabernet Sauvignon \$28: A restrained and elegant drop with cabernet's typical sweet/sour characters of blackcurrant, red berry fruits and firm tannins freshened by touches of



GRAEME PHILLIPS
wine

Coonawarra mint on both the nose and palate, full-bodied and finishing long and nicely balanced. 14.0 pc
www.mcwilliamswinegroup.com

Balnaves 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon \$35: A fragrant, minty

nose followed by a firm, tightly structured palate with juicy, briary fruit and leafy hints, good acid, balanced oak and fine, drying tannins, the finish mouth-puckering austere at this stage suggesting it needs more time before it shows its best. 14.5 pc
www.balnaves.com.au

Taltarni 2009 Shiraz \$40: Dark crimson colour, the nose redolent of briar, pepper and spice before an elegant, mid-weight and firmly structured palate that's deliciously flavoursome, dry and savoury with nicely moderated and integrated ripe tannins and a lovely long finish and aftertaste. 14.0 pc
www.taltarni.com.au

Grant Burge Filsell 2010 Old Vine Shiraz \$40: Lifted blackberry liqueur aromas with flavours of ripe blackberries, plums and chocolate aniseed rings in a classic fruit-driven Barossan style but more elegantly structured and with

more balanced, food-friendly restraint than many. 14.0 pc
www.grantburgewines.com.au

Mount Avoca 2010 Merlot \$30: Light with mint and leafy, herbal aromas and flavours underpinning the brambly fruit on a mid-weight palate that is an excellent food-friendly balance of flavours, structure, acid and tannic dryness. 13.0 pc
www.mountavoca.com

Tarrawarra Estate 2010 K-block Merlot \$35: Attractive, almost floral/fruity aromas before plum, mulberries, savoury herbs and the vanilla and spice flavours of oak show on a tightly-structured, lean-to-mid-weight palate that finishes long and dry with good balancing tannins. 14.0 pc
www.tarrawarra.com

Five-star fabulous Heemskerk 2011 Riesling \$45: A wonderfully fresh and juicy, intensely flavoured and finely structured drop with lime and

tropical fruit backed by racy, mineral acid, the finish crisp, dry and long-lingering. 11.5 pc
1300 651 650

Brokenwood 2007 Stanleigh Park Semillon \$45: Still a youthful green/gold colour with nose-prickling lemon sherbet aromas and similar lemony flavours on a wonderfully juicy and refreshing palate, light and beautifully balanced with some faint underlying suggestions of the toasty glories a few more years in the cellar will deliver. 10.5 pc
www.brokenwood.com.au

Cape Mentelle Wallcliff 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Semillon \$45: An intense, elegant and concentrated, multi-layered drop with smoky, herbal, nutty and fresh green apple flavours on a beautifully textured and balanced palate that finishes mouth-wateringly juicy and dry. 13.0 pc
www.capementelle.com.au

Don't miss Taste every Tuesday in the *Mercury*