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Good Living

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TABLE TALK

Why family meals matter

INSIDE: Cheese and wine special report

HOMECOOK HERO

Mother of invention

Trying new things is the key for this family, writes **Michelle Wilding**.

KATE ROBERTS is such a good cook, she's in constant demand to cater at family parties. If the stay-at-home mother isn't playing with daughters Charlotte and Matilda, she's in the kitchen creating recipes from scratch with Charlotte's help.

"I just make my own recipes up from taste," she says.

"If I go out for dinner I sort of break apart what's in the meal and go home and try it out myself.

"I'll tweak it to my taste and what my family likes. It's a bit of a challenge for me to get it right."

Kate has a few recipe books but she doesn't necessarily follow the instructions. "I enjoy trying something new and different, rather than try to test recipes from cookbooks," she says. "I do have them and look at them but I don't use them to cook."

After breakfast each day, Kate and her daughter Charlotte, 3, start preparing dinner. This can be chopping vegetables, making rissoles or marinating meat.



Taste test ... Kate Roberts and her daughters Matilda, 18 months, and Charlotte, 3, with fresh chicken and pumpkin lasagne. Photos: Marco Del Grande

"Charlotte loves to cook so we do a lot of baking; biscuits and cakes," Kate says. "Lately she's been making dinners with me."

Mother-in-law Jane Roberts, who nominated Kate, says she cooks delectable meals for family and friends on a tight budget and offers to make dishes for varied numbers of people.

"Kate did lunch for 60 for her father-in-law's birthday, afternoon tea for a friend's 80th and children's nibbles for the playgroup Christmas party," Jane says.

Kate's spinach and mushroom

fettuccine, party pies, chutney and beetroot relish are immensely popular with friends and family.

She considers organic ingredients and making food from scratch key elements to flavoursome meals and she makes her own pizza dough, pastry, pasta sauces, gravies, fruit smoothies and 18-month-old Matilda's baby food.

"I love cooking," she says. "It's basically what I want to do for the rest of my life. I want to start my own professional catering business with healthy food."

Kate Roberts's chicken and pumpkin lasagne

200g sliced pumpkin (2mm-3mm thick)	Salt and pepper
500g cooking tomatoes	2 cups water
1 small onion, diced	1 double breast chicken
Garlic	5-6 lasagne sheets
Chilli (optional)	100g grated mozzarella
Fresh basil	100g grated tasty cheese
30ml red wine	200g ricotta

Heat oven to 180C. Put pumpkin in a bowl and microwave on high for six to eight minutes or until tender. Drain. Set aside to cool. Dice tomatoes and fry over low heat with onion, garlic, chilli, basil, red wine, salt and pepper to

taste. Simmer until reduced to a thick sauce. Put water and chicken in pan, bring to boil then simmer until chicken is white and firm. Remove chicken, season and shred after cooling. Place lasagne sheets in a large baking dish with half of the tomato sauce, pumpkin slices, chicken and a combination of mozzarella and 80 grams of tasty cheese. Repeat layering process until finished. Cover with fresh ricotta and remaining tasty cheese. Bake for 30-45 minutes or until cheese is brown.

Serves 6

Recipe is not tested by Good Living.



NEW IN STORE

VILLAGE FARE

Fourth Village Providore opened in Mosman five months ago and is named after its owners, Annette and Peter Quattroville, whose parents hail from Calabria. Fourth Village Providore chargrilled eggplants are marinated in olive oil from the family's Hunter Valley farm and, combined with a nudge of chilli, garlic and thyme, are perfect to spread over pizza or toss through a pasta salad with artichoke, barbecued chicken and avocado. Also check out the eggplants in vinegar and extra-virgin olive oil, which elevate antipasti or hot bruschetta with prosciutto and shaved parmesan. \$9.90/400g, Fourth Village Providore, Mosman, 9960 7162.



SPECIAL BREW

After travelling extensively to find the best-quality raw products and equipment, Dean Morgan established Morgan's Handcrafted Coffee at Emu Plains in 2004. His signature blend, Cafe Verde, is a combination of beans from Brazil, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Panama. It's 100 per cent Rainforest Alliance certified and exhibits rich fruit and floral aromatics. The latest in the range is Espresso II, which has dominant chocolate flavours and a little more acidity than Cafe Verde. \$12/200g, The Essential Ingredient, Crows Nest, 9439 9881; Katipo Coffee House, Bondi, 9389 6405; Coffee Cup on Crown, Surry Hills, 9368 0004.



SWEET SURRENDER

Tim Malfroy and his father transport hundreds of beehives throughout central-western NSW and the Blue Mountains searching for flowering pastures. This year they took their bees into the Wollemi National Park and discovered a forest of flowering eucalypts. These mature native trees don't flower every year so the honey is a rare natural blend - rich, clean and complex. Malfroy's Gold Wollemi Wilderness Honey is divine drizzled over fresh fruit. \$12.50/150g, Tongue Teasers, Wahroonga, 9487 4631; The Point Deli, McMahons Point, 9955 1700; Four Olives Deli, Manly, 9977 4611.

Lynne Mullins

