



COOK'S CALENDAR

DELICATE DINING

Longrain Restaurant's Martin Boetz will produce delicate Thai and southern Chinese flavours at this cooking class at providore Simon Johnson's Alexandria store this Saturday. \$110pp, July 3, 10.30am-12.30pm; 24A Ralph St, Alexandria; ph 8244 8220, simonjohnson.com

OLYMPIC COOKS

Children aged 3-17 can cook up a storm at Sydney Olympic Park these school holidays and learn about healthy everyday eating from a qualified dietitian. They will learn food preparation and get to eat their creations in a tasty ending to each class, plus have a recipe book to take home. Ages 3-12 \$40pp, 13-17 \$60pp, parents free, Fridays July 9 and 16, 9.30am, 12.30pm, 3.30pm. Education Centre, Sydney Olympic Park; ph 9714 7888, sydneyolympic park.com.au

ED'S FAST FOOD

"Fast" Ed Halmagyi is guest chef at the Sydney Good Food & Wine Show next month. Ed will host four free cooking sessions at the Sydney show and around the country. The Better Homes and Gardens host will answer questions, offer product giveaways and hand out take-home recipe cards. Free with Good Food & Wine Show entry, adult \$28.50, child \$21.50. Tupperware stand, 11am-12.30pm, 2.30pm, 4.30pm, July 17, Sydney Convention Centre, Darling Drive, Darling Harbour; goodfood show.com.au

A gem of a store offers copper with cookbooks, writes **Grant Jones**

Kitchenware jewel

MICHAEL Robertson was cruising around the neighbourhood of Annandale

for an hour before he wandered across the great divide that is Parramatta Rd and headed into Camperdown.

It was there that he stumbled on an old jewellery factory up for lease which would be ideal for his new venture.

Open just over a month, Michael's kitchenware shop, Chef And The Cook, is brimming with copper pots and pans, glassware, cookbooks, teapots, baking trays and ceramic dishes.

Soon to come will be a little cafe to cater for customers who need a recharge after browsing through the 4000 lines he has on the shelves, the shop floor and the walls. Then will come a proper kitchen, using the old gas lines and big exhaust fans of the old jewellery factory.

"Before we get the cooking school going, what we will be doing on Saturdays is we'll start making steak sandwiches in the morning and try to educate people about the right pans to use.

"Some people blame the product for their mistakes when really they were sold the wrong product in the beginning."

There are also plenty of bargain kitchen implements for the everyday customer. Rejuvenated Kitchen Aids for \$700, about \$150 off, rustic Colombian clay pots, lead crystal glassware, Zero teapots from Japan, portable induction stoves and pastry cones, both sweet and savoury (\$73 for \$83), including flavours such as tomato, green tea – and chocolate, of course.



Shiny, happy . . . pots: Michael Robertson in his Camperdown kitchenware shop. Picture: Bob Barker

"I'm putting myself in between Essential Ingredient (now in Rozelle) and Chef's Warehouse in Surry Hills; that's kind of where I am targeting," Michael says. "So I do an extensive range of uniforms and the books are targeted more to chefs rather than *Australian Women's Weekly*-type things.

"We do a member's rate, too," he says. "You pay \$50 a year for your annual membership and you'll get at least 10 per cent off everything,

sometimes more. Books, electrical – the whole lot."

Members also receive an electronic newsletter.

"I'm playing it safe, because I just don't know who is walking through the door."

And when they do, they will probably be carrying knives, as Michael has a wet-grind knife-sharpening service, using a Swedish Tormek machine.

"If you use an old grinder, it gets hot and mucks up the steel," he says. And if you don't already have a top-shelf

blade, or want to add to your collection, the range of knives will increase from nine to 12, including the famed Damascus steel knives of Shun in Japan.

"We are trying to be just a little bit different and have knives that you don't see anywhere else. And you can test them all," Michael says.

The shop provides a chopping block and carrots, just to make sure the knife is right for you.

"We have an 8-inch (20cm) chef's knife of everything we

do, including the Shun. It's really just making sure you are happy with the handle and the weight, and everything else. So although we'd like to sell top-end, if one at \$80 suits you, then go for it. And if you are not happy, you can return it within 14 days.

"It's all about building up that loyalty, as well."

★ Chef And The Cook, 28-32 Mallet St, Camperdown; Monday to Saturday, 9am-5pm; ph 8004 6085, chefandthecook.com.au

Bye, bye to the usual pies



Pies party: Michael Di Salvatore from Mick's Bakehouse, which is based in the Riverina. Picture: Simon Dallinger

YOU really can't call yourself an Australian until you've eaten a meat pie at the footy.

It's the staple spectator diet for those who brave the blustery winter weather to cheer on their team.

Michael Di Salvatore is passionate about his pies, not because it's the middle of the footy season, but because he makes thousands every day. And not just your plain old "dog's eye and dead horse".

With changing times there has been an increase in multicultural and sophisticated tastes. Australians have embraced Indian curry and Thai dishes, and they have developed a taste for these new favourites wrapped in pastry. Mick's range includes surf and turf, chicken, cranberry and

camembert, massaman lamb, butter chicken, kangaroo stew and chicken chilli jam stir-fry.

"They are a meal in a pie," says Mick, who is based in Wagga and Leeton.

Mick and his parents opened Mick's Bakehouse in Leeton when he was just 18. He had just completed his baking apprenticeship, and has been scooping up awards for his pies for the past decade.

More than 70 per cent of his pies leave Wagga, and more than half are destined for Sydney for distribution by wholesalers Bob and Pete's; they are even sold in NSW Parliament House.

Australians sink their teeth into 500 million mostly mass-produced pies a year; Mick focuses on quality production.

"A plain meat pie we retail for \$3.50; some sell for up to \$4," he says. "We are using quality ingredients, no rubbish – we are very strict on what we buy. Always have been.

"It's not really rocket science, but I am really passionate about it, for all parts of the product.

"A lot of people will cut corners. A pie, to me, is one of the most staple products in Australia."

★ Mick's Pies are available at Sydney Showgrounds, David Jones, city and Bondi Junction, Franklin's Taren Point and Erina, and at several bakeries in the Sydney metropolitan area; ph 6925 9599, www.micksbakehouse.com.au

- Gail Williams and Grant Jones