



# AKAROA'S *French Connection*

*Ask the locals where to eat in Akaroa, and they're likely to point you in Ma Maison's direction.*

AKAROA, ON THE EASTERN SIDE OF Akaroa Harbour on Banks Peninsula, Canterbury is renowned as the only attempted French settlement in New Zealand.

In a tale of colonial rivalry, a shipload of mainly French nationals, lured down under with the promise of land and sovereignty over Akaroa, sailed into the harbour in August 1840 to find the Union Jack already flying from the flag pole on the hill.

Unbeknown to the hopeful French, the Treaty of Waitangi between the British Crown and Māori rangatira had been signed six months prior, however the originally promised allocation of land was honoured and many descendants of those founding

settlers are among Akaroa's 750-strong resident population today.

Street names like Rue Jolie, Rue Lavaud, and Rue Benoit live on in the quaint town with its characterful buildings and picturesque harbour, and it's a popular weekend destination just 85km from Christchurch city, attracting visitors year-round.

Akaroa hums during the biennial French Festival and when cruise ships anchor, with activities like boutique shopping, tours to see Hector's dolphins, fur seals and penguins, visits to artisan food and beverage producers, and dining out keeping people busy.

On Rue Balguerie, popular bar and bistro Ma Maison – "my house" – offers

uninterrupted views of historic Daly's wharf and Akaroa Harbour.

Owner Ben Campbell, a founding member of the 2000s Kiwi band ZED, has created a space and culture that encapsulates Akaroa.

Maitre'd Amy Harrison-Wright is at the helm, while executive chef Bevan Ward and his team of seven local and international chefs showcase the region's best produce.

Fresh tuna, scallops, prawns and world-famous Akaroa Salmon share the menu with Canterbury venison, lamb and beef and Harrison-Wright says regardless of the time of day, Ma Maison is a dining experience to get excited about.

"Perhaps a glass of wine in the sun while



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the kids play in the neighbouring playground, or Eggs Royale for brunch, but to truly experience Ma Maison we recommend the Trust the Chef option – you really can trust these chefs!"

In September 2023, Bayleys Canterbury supported the Christchurch City Mission's Back to School programme with its Bayleys Plate Up for a Purpose event where top restaurants made a donation from every order of a nominated dish – here's Ma Maison's secret risotto recipe.

## *Ma Maison Akaroa salmon and saffron preserved lemon risotto with a parmesan wafer*

### Ingredients

**Akaroa salmon** (skin on) 4 pieces weighing 160g-180g each

**Arborio rice** (short grain rice will work, too) 200g = 1.5 cups

**Fish stock** (or vegetable stock) 1lt = 4 1/4 cups

**White wine** 120ml = 1/2 cup

**Saffron** about 8 to 10 threads

**Olive oil** 30ml = 2 tablespoons

**Garlic cloves** 3 cloves minced = 1 tablespoon

**Shallots** 1 large, finely chopped or replace with a medium white onion

**Preserved lemon** 1/4 lemon, pith and centre removed or zest of 1 lemon

**Salt** to taste, suggest 1 teaspoon

**Fresh cracked black pepper** to taste.

**Parsley or chives** chopped, 15g = 1/4 cup

**Butter** 20g = 2 tablespoons

**Parmesan** grated 110g = 1 cup

**Watercress** 100g = 2 cups

### Method

• Preheat oven 200 degrees Celsius.

• Using the back of a knife, scrape any scales off salmon skin, quickly rinse under cold water then dry on a paper towel.

• Heat the stock in a medium-sized pot. Heat olive oil in a large heavy-based pot on medium to low heat, then add saffron, onion and garlic.

• Stir until softened and translucent in colour, and the saffron releases its colour into the oil.

• Add rice and mix with wooden spoon until all the grains are coated, approximately 2-3 minutes.

• Add the white wine, and deglaze using the wooden spoon to release any bits from the pan.

• Ladle over warm stock to just cover the rice – don't add all of it – and bring to a low simmer.

• Continue adding stock as needed, keeping rice just covered during the cooking process.

• After 15-20 minutes, test a grain of rice by squeezing between your finger and thumb and if there are two little white dots of uncooked rice, it's looking good!

• Heat a heavy-based fry pan to medium-high for the salmon.

• Add one last ladle of stock to risotto and allow that to absorb on low, stirring occasionally.

• Line an oven tray with baking paper, take 1/3 cup of grated parmesan and sprinkle evenly in a 20cm square, then place in pre-heated oven for 6 minutes.

• Add a little oil to the pan, season salmon skin with salt then place skin-side down in the pan, pressing initially with a fish slice to stop curling, and cook 3 to 4 minutes so skin crisps up.

• Remove risotto from the heat, add preserved lemon (or zest), butter, most of the parmesan and salt, folding through with a wooden spoon.

• Turn the salmon over and cook for a further 4 minutes on medium heat, then remove golden parmesan square from the oven, and cool for 2-3 minutes.

• Off the heat, add herbs to risotto and check seasoning, divide onto 4 plates, and remove salmon from the heat.

• In a bowl put watercress, a little parmesan, salt, pepper, and a dash of olive oil – mix until just coated, then break parmesan wafer into 4 big pieces.

• Place salmon on risotto, divide watercress salad between the plates, garnish with a wafer – bon appétit!

