

IN PERSPECTIVE

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SHARING AND LEARNING: KEY INGREDIENTS TO A GOURMET'S LIFE

Standing proudly as living proof to the passions of his birthplace, John Maiorana embodies how you can take *the boy from the land* without ever succeeding in taking *the land from the boy*. John emigrated with his family from his native Sicily at just six years old, but there are certain preferences, tastes and customs emanating from his native homeland that he will never lose. His passion for fresh food and ingredients, and for Italian food in particular, is both genuine and contagious. John embraces everything food related: from judging food, sharing food and its creation, critiquing restaurants, hospitality consulting, being a specialist cook, and educating about food.

John's love of Italian food, combined with his passion for imparting this knowledge to others, stems largely from his Mediterranean roots and the Region's culture of family values and sharing. One such family tradition, which John is enduringly enthusiastic about, is making *passata* (or tomato sauce).

The last week of John's summer holidays was spent making this culinary mainstay. As the big day loomed, glass containers were sterilised, machines oiled, capping equipment readied, onion and basil prepared, giant pots checked and the family labour force assembled. Each member had his or her role, and the extended family group could produce over 1,000 litres of *passata* in just a weekend. Even the youngest family members had a position, such as placing of a little basil at the bottom and top of each container, as the *passata*-making process drew to its happy conclusion in the homely garage of John's family.

As the two days of self-described "*mayhem*" ensued, everything in the chosen location adopted a red coloured covering of juice interspersed with seeds as (under a maternal close eye) the pots were boiled, seeds and skins removed, and the thick liquid *passata* funnelled into containers with their expertly placed basil leaves waiting at the bottom. After sealing, covering, boiling to preserve and cooling, the *passata* was then ready for storage, to be comprehensively enjoyed during the coming winter months.

Many families in Australia beyond John's own continue this enchanting family custom, and in the process ensure an important family bond is renewed, shared and cherished. Luckily for the rest of us, John shares his *passata*-making knowledge, along with all manner of other Italian delight, through his gourmet cooking classes. In 2004, John and partner Dominic Calautti opened a new concept kitchen appliance store at 145 Hay Street in Subiaco, and it is from this venue that John and other Perth *foodies* present a specialist range of scheduled cooking classes for individuals and groups in and around Perth. Attendance at these classes gives people the chance to experience some of the finest and most authentic Italian cooking and gourmet tuition available.

In addition, John and his team offer the chance for work colleagues to attend one of John's Corporate Cooking Days for a bit of team building – gourmet style! Increasingly popular due to their universal appeal, these gastronomic get-togethers with the Gourmet Godfather provide every opportunity for teams to work together, increasing morale, confidence and promoting increased productivity. These days are by appointment. Please phone John for more information.

With thanks to John Maiorana for his assistance with this article.

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