



## Kitchen Garden

by Susan Parsons



# A wild and delicious Christmas cake

Foragers and harvesters provided a great range of edible choices in our giveaway (Kitchen Garden, November 13) and here are a handful.

Judy Bamberger of O'Connor emailed from the Middle East where she was volunteering for the olive harvest in Palestine. Back home, rocket re-seeds in the blink of an eye for use in salads, stir fries, dips, omelettes and pesto.

Gabrielle from Narrandera lives on the Murrumbidgee but the rest of their dry-area farm is feeling the drought. She has planted basil for pesto, pizza, tomatoes and salads.

In Woolloomooloo, Lauren grows mini capsicums candy cane stripe on her balcony and Erin from Surry Hills picks blackberries dangling over her neighbour's fence to add to a summery white sangria.

Peter Harris of Latham is growing edamame (young soy beans) 'Centaur' variety, raised from Eden Seeds. He steams them Japanese-style. Peter recommends Broccoli 'Kailaan Express F1' from Mr Fothergill's and you can eat stems, leaves and flowers steamed or stir-fried from spring to autumn.

Mary Zouglakis from Tinbeerwah in Queensland nominated purslane which she has foraged for years, learning from her Greek parents who used it in salads, Tabbouleh and with olive oil, salt and lemon juice. Mary says it is rich in Omega 3 ALAs and it is gaining interest from programs like *Masterchef*. It thrives on her one hectare property in the subtropics. Canberra weeds expert Dr Richard Groves of Cook says purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*) is a

'cosmopolitan' plant which occurs in the ACT and appears occasionally in his garden. Catherine Keirnan of Tharwa says purslane grows there and, having heard it was a forager's food, she tasted plants on her property.

Adam Grubb, co-author of *The Weed Forager's Handbook* says purslane is available throughout Australia and is among their top 20 edible weeds. See the distribution

map from *The Council of Heads of Australasian Herbaria* (2012), published in his book.

The winner of *Slow Down and Grow Something* is Elspeth Nelson who, in a small garden in Wright, picks summer fruit from a dwarf mulberry, apricot tree, fig, pomegranate, red and black currants, Josta berries, goji berries, Tayberry and thornless blackberries but zucchini is most used in the household. The winner of *Milkwood* is Willa Mauldon of Garran

who grows Lebanese cucumbers in bales of straw (not hay). They learned the technique from a niece in Minnesota where summer growing season is very short. Water bales well for a week, placed on their side. Make four planting holes then water in seaweed fertiliser. Plants will grow up a trellis and produce all summer. Easy to pick, and no mildew. Can also be used for capsicums, tomatoes and eggplant. The hay slowly heats as it decays and is great compost.

### Wild Delicious

Amber Rose was raised on 160 hectares in a remote part of New Zealand north of Auckland where they grazed Dexter cattle, chickens,

ducks, pigs, guinea fowl and geese. In 2017 her mother was awarded a New Year Honour for services to conservation and heritage food production after collecting 800 heritage seeds.

Amber Rose is author of *Wild Delicious* (Penguin Random House

NZ, \$49.99) and she shares recipes in chapters including from the garden, the sea, the wild, the farm and the orchard. Amber moved back to New Zealand after living in the UK for twelve years where she cooked for celebrities including Gwyneth Paltrow.

The original recipe for the Christmas cake came from Fiona Cairns who made Kate and William's royal wedding cake. Amber was a food stylist on Fiona's TV show.

## Rich, moist Christmas cake

### INGREDIENTS

#### Fruit mixture:

**300g** raisins

**250g** sultanas

**250g** dark glace cherries

**100g** currants

**150g** crystallized ginger, chopped

**3** tsp tamarind paste

**4** tbsp maple syrup

**50g** (bitter) marmalade

**finely** grated zest 1 lemon and 1 orange

**1** tsp ground mixed spice

**150ml** brandy

#### Cake:



- 100g** cashews
- 150g** pistachios
- 250g** unsalted butter,  
softened
- 250g** coconut sugar
- 160g** ground almonds
- 5** large free-range eggs
- 200g** white spelt flour,  
sifted
- 2** tsp baking powder
- 1** tsp salt
- brandy**, for feeding cake

## METHOD

### Step 1

Place all fruit mixture ingredients in a large bowl and stir to combine. Cover with a clean tea towel or cling film and leave overnight.

### Step 2

Preheat oven to 180C. Lightly grease a 23cm loose-bottomed deep cake tin and line it with a double layer of non-stick baking paper. Tie a double layer of baking paper around the outside of the cake tin. Place cashews and pistachios on a baking tray and roast for 6 minutes. Transfer to a plate. Turn oven down to 140C.

### Step 3

Place butter and coconut sugar in bowl of your stand mixer and beat for 4 mins. Add ground almonds, stir in, add eggs one at a time, beat lightly after each addition. Add flour, baking powder and salt, soaked fruit plus any liquid, cashews and pistachios and gently fold everything together until well combined.

### Step 4

Scrape mixture into prepared tin and bake on a low shelf for 2.75-3.5 hours, until a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean - cover with foil if it is browning too much. Leave cake to cool in the tin, then sprinkle with brandy. Leave in cool place for at least a week, up to 3 months.

Serves 15



Christmas cake from *Wild Delicious*. Photo: Claire Mossong