

homemade



homemade

simply delicious food
anna gare

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT FRITH



FOR MY CHILDREN JACKSON AND ELSIE,
BY FAR THE BEST THINGS I HAVE EVER MADE.





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for me, food

has always been about much more than kitchens and recipes. It's about homes — the people in them, the music, the paintings on the walls, the friends who drop by. All the things we share. Our home is where we make our food and our food makes our home. That's what *Homemade* is all about.

I've spent years in restaurant kitchens, as a caterer and recently on TV cooking shows, but it's cooking at home that inspires me the most. The simple dishes you'll find in this book have come straight from my family dinners, lunches and impromptu feasts with friends. While I cooked, friends and family took notes and this book started to take shape.

My food, like everyone's, has been shaped by my life. I grew up in Fremantle, Western Australia, and I remember as a young girl admiring the local Italians and how they were passionate about preparing and cooking their food. Families bottling homegrown tomatoes together, making sausages, pickling olives and having fun!





For them, food was not a chore; it was more of a ritual and celebrated as a social occasion. That really excited me. And I think it taught me that not only can good food make an occasion, it can be the occasion itself.

In my family we grew up eating good simple food — lots of meat and steamed veg. Mum cooked to feed us. I don't recall the terms 'gourmet food' or 'medium rare' back then; it was just plain and honest.

I was one of four kids and there were usually a few extras around, so dinnertime was always like a party. We had a lovely big open kitchen and it was the centre of our home. We would often sit at the kitchen bench together chatting and preparing dinner. This was my favourite part of the day.

Every tree in our garden produced edible fruits. There were always huge bowls full of fruit on offer, and Mum and Dad wouldn't let us eat rubbish. We didn't get treats like cordial, biscuits and sugar-loaded cereals. I had a sweet tooth, so as soon as I could reach the kitchen bench, I started making my own treats — cakes, bickies, cordials and fruit jellies.





Some things never change. I still make food I love to eat; it's just more savoury these days. And my favourite time of the day is still when my own family gathers at the dinner table. I have always been a feeder and a gatherer of people, looking for excuses to get my friends together and cook beautiful food — an impulse that led me to a career in the kitchen.

Once when Mum was watching me cook for a party I'd organised, she looked at me with one of those motherly smiles and said, 'You know, you could make a living out of this.' And so Deluxe Catering was born. Since then, my kitchen has been my home, my office and my workplace.

You'll notice as you read that I'm a free-range cook. I'm not big on rules. The recipes aren't even arranged in any particular order. But the great thing about home cooking is that you don't have to play by the rules — it's what separates it from production-line food. I like to cook by taste, in the same way that I play music by ear. It's just more fun that way. And it leads to variations a traditional cook or chef might never try.

Home cooking is at its best when it stops being a recipe and starts being something freer. Something that responds to what's in the market, what's in the fridge and who walks through the door. The tart you make on a hot summer night while your friend tells you about her new love affair will be very different from the one you cook in winter for your mother-in-law.

I'm hoping you will be inspired by these recipes. Good luck with your cooking and remember to have fun. Don't hold back. Cook them as they are — or make them your own.

If these dishes become favourites in your home I'll be happy. If they lead you to create your own I'll be ecstatic.

anna

aromatic pork curry

SERVES 6–8.

2.5 kg boneless pork shoulder, diced into 3 cm cubes
2 tablespoons peanut oil
850 mL coconut milk
4 Kaffir lime leaves
2 sticks lemongrass, bashed and tied in a knot
2 whole star-anise
1 cinnamon quill
6 cardamom pods
½ cup shredded coconut, roasted (optional)

Curry paste
15 small dried red chillies
6 Asian shallots, peeled and roughly chopped
8 cloves garlic, peeled
2 ½ tablespoons roughly chopped ginger
2 ½ tablespoons roughly chopped galangal
1 teaspoon shrimp paste
3 tablespoons peanut oil
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

I OFTEN USE PORK SHOULDER FOR CURRIES AND CASSEROLES. IT IS THE PERFECT CUT FOR SLOW-BAKED OR PRESSURE COOKER DISHES.

Mix the curry paste ingredients in a blender or food processor, until smooth.

Heat the oil in a pressure cooker. Add the curry paste and sauté it lightly for 2 minutes.

Add the pork, coat it well in the curry paste, and fry it for 2 minutes.

Stir in the coconut milk, lime leaves, lemongrass and spices.

Place the lid on the pressure cooker and cook the curry for 45 minutes, until tender.
(Follow the manufacturer's instructions for operating your pressure cooker.)

Serve with rice and garnish with roasted coconut.

I HAVE REDISCOVERED MY PRESSURE COOKER. IT TAKES SO LITTLE TIME TO GET A SUCCULENT AND TENDER RESULT. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A PRESSURE COOKER, BAKE THE CURRY IN A CASSEROLE DISH, WITH THE LID ON, AT 160°C FOR 3 HOURS, OR UNTIL TENDER.

