

One Bowl Wonder

The Japanese donburi or rice bowl truly is a one bowl wonder. The Japanese make cooking for one a simple affair. It is partly the mindset of simplicity and partly a frugal approach to eating that is not only healthy and economical but practical when your fridge contents don't look that promising. Probably one of my favorite one bowl wonders is oyakodon, *don* referring to the rice bowl and *oyako*, meaning parent and child, which in this dish refers to the chicken and egg. It is a very comforting dish and can be made with one chicken thigh fillet or even left over cooked chicken. All you need is a bowl of a rice, an egg, onion or a couple of spring onions, your chicken and the usual suspects of the Japanese pantry; dashi stock powder, soy sauce and mirin. Cook your Japanese rice and while it is resting gently fry the onion and the chicken pieces (if using cooked chicken you just need to heat it), add 100 ml dashi stock and a tablespoon each of soy and mirin. Bring that to the simmer and then turn off the heat. Put your hot rice into a rice bowl then gently beat the egg in a small bowl with your chopsticks. Pour it onto the still hot chicken, mix it through quickly and then scrape it immediately onto the rice. You want the egg to retain a creamy texture. Done.

For a vegetarian donburi I use silken tofu, a couple of spring onions, one shiitaki mushroom and maybe something green like a handful of shaved Savoy cabbage, some spinach leaves or a few small florets of broccoli. For the sauce I like the one used for the dish, mapo tofu. For one serve you just need a dessert spoon each of sweet chili sauce, oyster sauce, soy, mirin and water. You can also add a teaspoon of miso. Simmer a small block of silken tofu in water for 5 minutes, drain it in a sieve and let it cool to firm it up a bit before cutting into cubes. Fry the sliced onion and shiitaki, mix in the sauce and the vegetable, letting it cook for 2-5 minutes,

depending on what vegetable you are using and then finally add the tofu and heat it gently. Add to the top of your rice bowl. Done.

The most important part of these frugal meals is the rice. Japanese short grain rice is really beautiful and once you try it you will find it hard to go back to other types. I recommend getting a big bag from an Asian grocery that stocks Japanese goods. For one-person cooking using a small cast-iron enameled casserole dish, like Le Creuset, is the best way to prepare the rice or alternately you can buy a small ceramic Japanese rice pot at a specialty store. A rice cooker is useful when cooking for more people. For one person you only need 90 grams of rice.

To prepare your rice. Weigh out 90 grams of rice and then wash it in a sieve under running water, moving your fingers through the grains to saturate them with water. Put the rice into the cast-iron pot along with 110 mls of water and leave that to soak for about 30 minutes. Heat the rice and when it starts to boil, cover with the lid and place the dish on the lowest heat setting possible for 13 minutes. Once the time is up turn the heat off and rest the rice for a further 13 minutes. During that 13 minutes of rest time you can cook the topping for your one bowl wonder. Use a plastic or wooden paddle to transfer big scoops of the rice to your rice bowl. It should be a little bit sticky and hold together nicely, so it is easy to eat with chopsticks. Cooking the rice until it is just right might take a few goes but once you get the hang of it you can virtually do it blindfolded. If you are concerned about eating too much white rice, try brown rice for a change or add some mixed grains or cooked adzuki beans to the rice. Grain mixes for rice can also be purchased at Japanese grocers.

[Tokyo Hometown Supermarket, Elizabeth Street, Melbourne](#)

[Suzuran, Camberwell](#)

[Hinoki, Fitzroy](#)

[Fuji Mart, South Yarra](#)



Canals – End of an Era

Long established small businesses are dying out, which is not so surprising as we cannot always expect the next generation to learn the ropes and take over the helm with the same enthusiasm. It is remarkable then that Canals Seafood has been running as a family-run fishmonger in inner suburban Melbourne, first in Collingwood and then North Carlton, since 1917. But four generations of dedicated knowledge and customer service is unfortunately about to end when John and Peter

Canals put the property up for sale and close the business in October this year. No longer will there be anxious queues on the footpath for seafood orders at Christmas and if you have been used to quality fish and shellfish on a weekly basis then you will have to seek alternatives. I will miss Canals. I loved the fact that they sold local, Victorian fish for preference and were happy to clean, fillet and advise you on the best way to cook your fish. I wish the guys an enjoyable and well earned retirement, no doubt with more time to fish. I will have to adjust, as we all have to in life, but I dread to think what lies ahead for this retail space, hopefully not another beauty salon or burger bar. ☐



Holy Goat – Simply The Best

[Holy Goat](#) cheese producers in Sutton Grange, Victoria have regularly won awards from the Delicious Magazine Produce Awards. Their wonderful goat cheese, Silk, is a favorite of mine but I have to say all their cheeses are simply the best and it is not surprising that they have again secured a Gold Medal, this time for their newest product, Nectar, a washed rind, cow and goats milk cheese. You can find Holy Goat cheeses at [numerous stockist around Melbourne](#) or come to one of the accredited farmers' markets they attend and have a taste of each of their cheeses. Even if you are a reluctant goat cheese eater I promise you will love the creamy and delicate flavours of Holy Goat cheese. I hope you enjoy the awards promotional video, which takes you back from the plate to the dairy to show you where and how these exceptional local cheeses are produced.

Holy Goat will be at Abbotsford Convent, Slow Food Farmers' Market this Saturday September 23.

Quiche – A Formula For Success

A quiche that is a delicate, just set custard with a crispy pastry, not long out of the oven, is a joy to eat. I still remember eating such a quiche in Aix-en-Provence and wondering how those cunning Frenchies get it so right; baked to order or not kept in the fridge and reheated to toughness might have been part of it. The formula of eggs, cream and milk and the correct baking time is the other part of quiche success. Once

you master that there is nothing stopping you making up the rest with whatever you have in the fridge. Bake one and then consume it when tepid, it will make the world of difference.

A mix of 4 whole eggs, 250 ml full cream milk and 250 ml pouring cream (try Saint David Dairy) will fill a large 26 cm diameter and 4 cm deep ring form with room for your choice of additions. Smoked trout with Swiss chard and the zest of a lemon is a really delicious combination (pictured). Other flavours to try are bacon, ham, spinach, mushrooms, broccolini, radicchio, artichokes, asparagus, salmon (fresh or smoked), sorrel, caramelised onions and nutmeg, leeks, mint and feta, roasted capsicum, olives and onion..... You can add some grated cheese as well and a mild Italian style cheese such as caciotta is perfect. Be sparing as you don't want a quiche to taste too cheesy or to lose that custard-like consistency. [That's Amore brand of caciotta](#) can be found in supermarkets selling a good range of cheeses or those with an Italian clientele. Choose a flaky, thin layer of pastry for added delicacy and bake for 30 minutes at 180°C and then leave it to rest for 5-10 minutes before serving.



Autumn Harvest

Autumn is a busy time for those who love to do their own food gathering, foraging and harvesting. Once you have amassed your booty of chestnuts, wild mushrooms and Jerusalem artichokes there is then work to be done in the kitchen. This week I was given a big bag of chestnuts, collected up in Bright, which were a breeze to peel as they turned out to be either just the right age in the chestnut season (mid April to August) or possibly an easy peel variety, like De Coppi Marone. This is the first time that I was able to slip the chestnuts out from their outer husk and fibrous inner membrane in one go. I made a small cut on one side of each nut and then placed a handful

at a time in simmering water for 2 to 3 minutes before peeling them with a small knife while just cool enough to handle. In less than an hour I had filled two containers with peeled chestnuts for the freezer so they will be ready for those tasty winter meals like chestnut soup and chicken or guineafowl with a rich chestnut stuffing.

Autumn is also the time for wild mushrooms. Pine mushrooms and slippery jacks can be gathered early in the morning in Victoria's pine forests if you know where to look or can be bought at farmers markets and quite a few green grocers and specialty food shop now. It is turning out to be a great wild mushroom season. Again you can clean and freeze thick slices of these mushrooms for later use. [Pines can be blanched in boiling water](#) to clean them but the softer slippery jacks are best wiped with damp kitchen paper. They both go well in a ragu, stew, risotto, stuffing or simply sauteed and served on toast.



slippery jacks

My other Autumn harvesting task this week was dealing with a large bag of Jerusalem artichokes from a friend's garden. They were a super, big-bulbed variety, so I thought they would be easier to peel than the usual gnarly sort I see at markets. After some internet research and choosing a reliable source, I boiled them for 15 minutes, after which the skins were supposed to slip off. Sorry Mr Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall but this didn't work at all, not in the Southern hemisphere at any rate. Seems whatever approach you adopt (potato peeler on raw bulbs or boiling first) there's loads of wastage. Now if I was just going to roast them in the oven with garlic I would have only scrubbed these lovely looking ones but as I intended to make a velvety artichoke soup, peeling was necessary. The great tip I got from my friend and the wwf is that cooking Jerusalem artichokes for a long time converts the flatulence-causing inulin to a more comfortable fructose. So, if you love the flavour of Jerusalem artichokes but not the

consequences, I suggest making the soup in a slow cooker (high setting at a temperature around 95-100°C) for about 4 or so hours. Saute a chopped onion and garlic then pop the roughly peeled and sliced bulbs (about 1 kg) in with some bay leaves and thyme, cover with chicken stock and water and walk away. To finish the soup, remove the herbs, blend with a stick blender until super smooth (suggest a final pass through a sieve so there are no lumps) and then add milk or cream and seasoning. Serve garnished with snipped chives or crushed hazelnuts and a drizzle of hazelnut oil. You can of course freeze some of your puree for a later (flatulence-free) date.



Jerusalem Artichokes In Slow Cooker



Jerusalem Artichoke Soup