



Fresh from vegie patch

On the sparkling opening morning of Floriade I joined a large crowd sitting under an arbour at Lindeman's Open Garden. We had a pink early harvest wine as gardener Meredith Kirton and chef Dominique Rizzo did a garden cooking demonstration.

The women spoke about using fresh ingredients and working them from the garden to the plate. Kirton had a planter box of herbs including rosemary, which was used in a flower punch, along with coriander, rocket and parsley, used in salads, and pineapple sage, which was an ingredient in a melon salsa to go with pineapple fritters.

The first dish on the Floriade menu was a broad bean, prosciutto and lettuce salad (recipe follows).

Meredith Kirton has been committed to gardening and horticulture for more than 20 years. She is a gardening presenter, author, landscape designer and gardening ambassador for Lindeman's wines.

At her farm on the mid-north coast, they are blessed with great soil and a climate that includes regular rainfall, which she says makes growing your own fruit and vegetables, herbs and spices easier. Her family has an orchard of stonefruit, some tropical fruits and nut trees. There is also a large kitchen garden where they grow perennial vegetables like asparagus and Jerusalem



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artichokes, herbs and salad greens, tomatoes, eggplants and cucumber in summer.

It was the development of this garden that led Kirton to write *Harvest*, a guide to kitchen gardening, as she was frustrated with the overseas bias in many other guides. She teamed up with a cook, designer and photographer to create her blog, *GrowHarvestCook*, which updates an ingredient fortnightly and delves into how to grow it, use it and store it.

Dominique Rizzo is a Brisbane-based, Sicilian-Australian well known for her appearances on TV's *Ready, Steady, Cook*. Through her business, Pure Food Cooking, she aims to inspire others to cook with fresh, seasonal produce and, for seven years, Rizzo was head chef and partner at Mondo Organics restaurant, catering and cooking school in Brisbane.

Rizzo's first cookbook, *My Taste of Sicily* (Lantern, \$39.95), with photographs by former Canberran Alan Benson, captures the essence of her family's homeland and peasant way of life through their favourite recipes. On visits to her uncle's farm she gathered freshly laid eggs, picked lemons and oranges in their orchard, and recalls her



Dominique Rizzo's artichoke and bean soup from *My Taste of Sicily*.

uncle entering the house with a lamb hung over his shoulders. She rolled polpette (meatballs) with her nonna, washed wild greens and made pasta by hand.

In the chapter "Verdure" (vegetables) she shares recipes for caponata relish Rizzo style; Zia Nunzia's eggplant stuffed with pecorino, mint and garlic; mashed potato cake; baked pumpkin custard and fried cauliflower Sicilian-style.

Rizzo's broad bean, artichoke and pea soup recipe, which follows, is an edited extract from the chapter on salads, starters and soups in the book.

>> To hear Kirton and Rizzo discuss edible plants and watch them prepare dishes, visit their final presentations at the Lindeman's Open Garden at Floriade, this weekend, October 15 and 16, 11am to 4pm.

>> Susan Parsons is a Canberra writer.