



lou perri

FROM THE STUNNED MULLET

PALATE PLEASURES

DEMAND AND SUPPLY

The 'have it all' and 'have it now' nature of today's society pretty much allows us to fulfil our every whim at a moment's notice. At a touch of a button we can upload a picture of, let's say – a car we bought today, to all our family and friends scattered far and wide throughout the globe. Any scarce collector's item can be ours after a quick google and a bit of postage and handling, no matter where we live and who we are. It's even possible to negotiate the price – a delicate tiptoe through online auctioning and bartering sites means that not only can we have what we want, when we want it – but also it's possible to control the perceived value or worth of an object...seemingly tailor made to personal specifications.

At the supermarket it appears that everything is in season all the time – and it is! At least it is somewhere on the globe, or was several months before somewhere on our continent - conveniently snap frozen and thawed for your convenience at a time you should so hanker after it. Fancy an orange in January? No worries – there's an abundance of Californian navels heading our way on a big plane. Or a mango in July? Hello Dominican Republic (or somewhere like that).

Food miles and carbon footprints aside, pandering to the daily whims of the public is big business, and we've all grown to expect an enormous array of choice in our everyday lives. Although we have the voice of environmental sustainability speaking in one ear imploring us to think local, to support regional produce – on the other hand we demand global diversity. Our competent digital communication conjures up a daily international perspective to entice us towards other cultures. They are accessible with a click on the mouse, so we want them in our daily diet too. Japanese tonight, Mexican tomorrow....No problemo, all the ingredients are available at Coles.

So too, when we go out to eat we expect a selection of international cuisine, a tempting array of choices – appealingly and lovingly ordered with all our favourites, plus a couple of weird and wonderful quirky options too. All too often we display our natural human tendency to stay with what is safe, known, familiar. ...If there's Barramundi and Mulloway we'll choose Barra. It's an Aussie staple right?

But is it a staple in February, or is it just plain out of season?

What a customer wants is not necessarily what's best or what's freshest. Restaurants pander to the whims of the public in much the same way that supermarkets do, offering a selection of the most appealing options. Whilst attempting to attune to seasonality (fish of the day for instance), standard menu choices are built around staples – white fish of some sort, omega 3 fish (tuna, salmon or ocean trout), chicken, prawns (cos people love 'em), red meat and maybe something gamey too.

That way there's something for everyone! All bases are seemingly covered but at what cost? Higher raw food costs for produce that's hard to come by for one, a compromise in quality and subsequent flavour for the other.

Wouldn't it be better to just forsake all that feel good crowd pleasing stuff, and well, let's just put it out there.....DO AWAY WITH A MENU FULL STOP?

There's actually a restaurant in Melbourne that does it called Da Noi– they ask you if there's anything you can't eat, and you can

say 'I feel like fish', and then something delicious and fishy comes out. What a great way to dine – the responsibility of choosing that winner of a menu item is out of your hands, the possibility of eating something fresh, flavoursome and seasonal is highly likely, and the chef gets to indulge any creative inspiration that appears in front of him at the market seemingly yelling 'pick me, I taste absolutely amazing right now'.

But we humans are creatures of habit. And when we want something, we just want it – forget about the alternatives.

Let's face it -the known is much safer than the unknown, even if it is snap frozen from last year's harvest.

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