



# Oi!

AUSTRALIAN CELEBRITY CHEF **SCOTT WEBSTER** WORKS THE FRESHEST OF PRODUCE WITH EUROPEAN AND ASIAN TECHNIQUES, ADDS DASHES OF INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN FLAVOURS AND SERVES UP OUT-OF-THE-BOX FARE TO CRITICAL ACCLAIM AT HIS YEAR-OLD OSIA RESTAURANT. IN TOWN FOR A MASTERCLASS BY DBS INDULGE AND THE ASIAN FOOD CHANNEL, HE SPOKE WITH **LAUREN TAN**

**What was the exact moment that made you go, "Hey! I can cook"?** I still haven't had that exact moment! For me, I'm learning everyday. But the first moment I thought that I enjoyed cooking was at 14-years-old. At school, I joined the class where all the girls were — cooking class. I thought it was fantastic because you got to eat good food for lunch instead of school food, and I never worried about getting a date!

**So what was taught in the class?** It was home-style food. Australian food reflects the lifestyle. So simple foods, like grilled meats, lamb and fish. Nothing complicated. It wasn't about the presentation, it was about the ingredients and simplicity of the food, which to me, is still reflected in my food today. I grew up on such home-style food. I love my mother's cooking, and I still love mum's cooking, but unfortunately she's not well and can't cook as well as she used to.

**You are known to infuse indigenous Australian flavours into your cooking.** Yes. I started to utilise indigenous flavours in my European-Asian style training to make the food taste like it came from Australia — items such as wattle seeds and lemon myrtle for flavour, as opposed to using the proteins. Australia may be a young country, but we've got one of the oldest proven cultures. So if I was going to take a piece of Australian beef abroad, for example, why not make it taste like it came from Australia with bangsia and eucalyptus and that kind of stuff? And we use them in Osia. Not in every dish, but scattered throughout the menu.

**How would you describe modern Australian cuisine?** I think it's a melting pot of many different cultures. We don't have a cuisine like Asian, Italian or French food because those are developed over many, many years. But what we have is some of the best ingredients in the world, as well as chefs from many different cultures coming down. Food is about lifestyle, and Australia has such an easygoing lifestyle that the hero on the plate, to me and to most of the chefs in Australia, is the ingredients.

**As a chef yourself, which establishments in your hometown of Newcastle do you frequent?** People say "What's the best restaurant you've ever had dinner in?" And my honest answer is McDonald's. When I take the family there, the kids are happy, and so my wife is happy, and I can sit, have a coffee, and read my newspaper. When I dine out it's mostly at family-owned, mum-and-pop type restaurants where they cook from the heart. Otherwise, I prefer to cook at home. And if I have friends come in, I'd invite them to eat in my garden and I'd cook a barbecue or some simple stuff. I don't go out fine dining any more. □



Polenta crumbed foie gras