

Kitchen Garden: The versatile root vegetable is a favourite of Susan 'Parsnip' Parsons

By Susan Parsons

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The parsnip gift was washed, chopped and roasted, tender to its core.

Picture: Elesa Kurtz

The winter solstice marks the start of the fruit tree pruning season so it was a treat to be invited to an orchardists' table in the Red Hill country kitchen of Teresa Zarlenga ([Kitchen Garden, March 1](#)). I joined Dr Mark O'Connor, of O'Connor, and Dr Jonathan Banks, of Pialligo, for an orchard walk among the trees which had put on a lot of top growth due to La Nina rains and healthy soil provided by Teresa. Mark learnt via my column about Teresa's 28 fruit trees, including five feijoas, and introduced her to his colleague Jonathan. At the table, both men commented on the row of vibrant orange persimmons lining the sill of a large bay window, a gift to Teresa from a friend. We relished Teresa's favourite dish from her Italian childhood, ragu bianco di agnello, vino e cipolla and pappardelle al-

uovo fatte in casa (white ragu with lamb, wine and onion and homemade egg pappardelle with pecorino).

The lamb is long cooked with the onions and wine and its liquid is tossed through the pasta which is a first course with freshly ground black pepper and pecorino. That was followed by small bowls of the lamb, beetroot and saffron milkcap mushrooms which Teresa had foraged.

Dessert was Teresa's famous feijoa sorbet. Both courses tempted Mark (Canberra's feijoa expert) to Google the recipes and, in his home kitchen, to start cooking the ragu and make the sorbet. He always has pulp and skin from homegrown feijoas in his freezer. Jonathan was formerly a research scientist with CSIRO entomology working on improving technologies for storage of cereal grains and similar post-harvest commodities and his orchard at Pialligo is especially known for its varieties of apples. Conversation ranged from pruning, to this being the time for grafting Japanese plums in Canberra and parsnips.

I asked about blisters that can be caused by casual contact with foliage of umbellifers including parsley, fennel, wild dill, carrot, mustard, lime, celery and wild parsnips followed by sunlight exposure. A topic worth Googling ([see healthline on phytophotodermatitis](#)).



Parsnips are a favourite root vegetable of Parsnip Parsons. Picture: Shutterstock

On *The Canberra Times'* visit to the garden of John Robertson in Ainslie ([Kitchen Garden, June 7](#)), I was given a very long parsnip, a favourite root vegetable of Parsnip Parsons. Best harvested after the first frosts, it was washed, chopped and roasted and was tender to its core.

Parsnip soup with chestnuts and chives, perfect in winter, is on Ginger Catering's Our Kitchen Our Growers lunch at the National Arboretum Canberra on July 31 ([bookings essential](#)). It will be followed by an entree of applewood smoked Murray cod with braised fennel and fennel fronds, and a main of slow-roasted lamb with Garlicious Grown black garlic and Ingelara Farm Nicola potato mash.

READ MORE:

- [Purple reigns in the garden, a superfood in dishes](#)
- [The bountiful gardens of Goodwin Village](#)
- [Fun \(and a lot of caution\) with fungi foraging](#)

Wet and dry

On Saturday, July 23, the Nimmitabel and District Garden Club is holding a special event featuring the challenges of a changing climate. ABC South East Garden garden gurus Brent Whiter and Paul West will present live talkback and a question-and-answer session. Monaro region special guests include Jim Osborne, a landscape architect and farmer based in the Bombala region who focuses on regenerative and sustainable agricultural practices, and Sidonie Carpenter, of Green Canopy in Jindabyne, who created garden designs that respond to the local landscape.

There will be stalls with local plants, condiments, books and garden furniture. To be held in the Nimmitabel Pioneer Memorial Hall, cost \$30pp includes morning tea and lunch. Enquiries to 0428 546 366.

Book online at nimmitabelgardenclubwetordry.eventbrite.com

A parsnip soup will be on the Nimmitabel lunch menu, for this column, Monaro resident Denham Williams has shared her spicy parsnip soup recipe which originated with Jamie Oliver but was very rich so it has been experimented with and adapted by Denham who grows her own parsnips.



A parsnip soup will be on the menu at the Nimmitabel and District Garden Club lunch. Picture: Shutterstock

Denham's spicy parsnip soup

Ingredients

1 onion

2 cloves garlic

1 x 5cm fresh ginger

olive oil

knob of butter

1 tbsp garam masala

6 parsnips, peeled and chopped into 3cm pieces

500ml skim milk (or coconut milk for variety)

750ml good quality vegetable stock

1 fresh red chilli

To serve:

crusty bread and extra virgin olive oil (optional)

Method

Peel onion, garlic and ginger and chop roughly. Heat splash of olive oil and butter in large saucepan. Add onion, garlic, ginger and garam masala. Gently fry until the onion is soft. Stir parsnip into onion mixture until well coated. Add the milk and stock, season well and bring to boil. Turn down the heat, put the lid on and simmer for 30 mins. The parsnips are cooked when soft. Remove from the heat, blitz with a stick blender until smooth and creamy.

Deseed and finely chop the chilli and scatter over the soup. Serve with crusty bread and a little extra olive oil, if desired.

Makes 4 hearty serves.