



Chris Tonner

Executive Head Chef at Beetroot Restaurants

Chris Tonner is the culinary star behind two of Aberdeen's most admired restaurants, La Stella and the Courtyard. Here he shares his recipe for success...

Why did you decide to become a chef?

Looking back, my mum was a huge influence. She got me involved making homemade soups, stews and roasts. When I was twelve I began a job washing dishes at the old Courtyard Restaurant and found the chef really inspiring. Pretty soon I was learning more than just scrubbing pans.

Tell us how you came full circle to being Executive head chef of Beetroot Restaurants Ltd. After many years in the trade, it was my dream to run my own place, so we built up La Stella. After adding The Courtyard, I moved into executive Head Chef role overseeing our highly skilled teams of chefs.

What tips do you have for Trend readers on making the most of seasonal Scottish ingredients? There are some brilliant food magazines that are full of seasonal ideas. I'd also suggest exploring local farm shops and farmers markets as they supply amazing local produce. Spring is one of my favourite seasons with many delicious ingredients. Buy some rhubarb and try something different with it!

What do you love about cooking and your job? Absolutely everything! I love innovation, new ideas, the amazing produce we have to work and I love working with my Dad. I can honestly say the restaurants would not be as successful as they are without him to motivate everyone. He's a truly great man!

What are your plans for the future? My main objective is to grow Beetroot Restaurants and develop it into a training ground for aspiring young people who fancy a shot at the industry. I also want to write a cookbook and do more charity work.

Ever had a culinary disaster? Well, I did set a kitchen on fire while working in a city centre hotel just an hour before 200 people turned up for a wedding reception. Not my greatest moment.

Pan fried King Scallops with home smoked Venison, braised Puy lentils, beetroot slaw and lemon grass emulsion for four people

You'll need something to hot smoke the venison. Smokers can be bought online or you can make your own with some woodchips, a metal tray and a cooling rack.

12 King Scallops – roe removed, 500g venison loin, 150g Puy Lentils – soaked in water for 2 hours, 2 shallots, 1 garlic clove, 200ml light fish stock, 100ml white wine, chopped flat leaf parsley, a large beetroot, tarragon sprig, a pinch of caster sugar, 25ml champagne vinegar, a bunch of Lemongrass, 2 egg yolks, a lemon, salt and pepper, 125ml Ola oil.

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Slowly heat the oil in a pan with the bashed lemon grass, grated lemon rind & juice. Cool this mixture to room temperature. In a blender add the egg yolks & very slowly add the lemongrass infused oil & emulsify at high speed

Finely dice the shallots and sweat until soft in a pan. Add the lentils and wine then reduce for ten minutes. Now add the fish stock and cook until the lentils are soft and the liquid has evaporated. Allow this to cool then add the parsley and check seasoning.

Season and seal the venison in a frying pan, then slowly smoke it for around an hour.

To make the beetroot slaw grate the raw beetroot and in a bowl mix with the tarragon, champagne vinegar, sugar, then season and add a glug of Ola oil.

Finally, dry the scallops off then cook in a very hot pan with a little of the oil until golden. Check the seasoning, assemble the dish and serve.

La Stella

New Lunch & Spring Creations Menu now available!

Welcome to **La Stella**, Aberdeen's Bistronomy restaurant.

Why not come along and try our new menus & extensive Daily fish specials.

The chefs at La Stella have been experimenting with lots of local spring produce and have come up with some delicious new dishes. As recommended in this years Michelin Guide. Booking essential.

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