



Otahuna Lodge

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY JIMMY McINTYRE  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIERAN SCOTT / STYLE EDITOR TAMARA WEST

# the constant garden

OTAHUNA LODGE'S EXECUTIVE CHEF **JIMMY McINTYRE** HAS A MAGICAL SOURCE OF YEAR-ROUND INSPIRATION JUST OUT THE BACK DOOR





**JIMMY  
McINTYRE**  
EXECUTIVE CHEF,  
OTAHUNA LODGE

**The bountiful potager** at Otahuna Lodge is not just a pretty place. Planted in a stone-walled paddock once home to Clydesdale stallions, it is certainly scenic but, more to the point, it's a prolific source of fresh produce and inspiration.

"We've got so much stuff - it never ends. So we have to keep coming up with ideas," says Jimmy. He is helped in this by a talented duo, sous-chef Jeremy Scheiblauber and chef de partie Adrian Harrison.

Jimmy tends not to plan his menus, but rather works with the seasons. In late May he was harvesting the second planting of broad beans and peas, and beetroot were still going - seen in his delicious beetroot soup here. Golden yams and other root vegetables were about to come up and he was using the fennel bulbs that flourish all year.

Much of the produce is heirloom, with at least 15 varieties of tomatoes and some rare potatoes. The oaks planted when the house was built in 1895 host porcini mushrooms, while shiitake and oyster mushrooms grow in the old apple house. The vegetarian pigs provide lardo, coppa, prosciutto and pancetta (see image at right).

The lodge was refurbished a couple of years ago with what is considered one of the best restorations of a building of that period, and houses a significant private New Zealand art collection - an ideal match with the artistry back of house.

■ TONI MASON

**Otahuna Lodge**, Tai Tapu, Canterbury,  
[otahuna.co.nz](http://otahuna.co.nz)

## BEETROOT SOUP

This is one of my all-time favourite soups. It has such a sweet earthiness and the perfect accompaniment is a fresh chèvre-style goat's cheese and a rich, lush Pinot Gris. One of my favourites is the Crater Rim Rata Vineyard Pinot Gris from Akaroa.

In winter, when the tomatoes are not up to scratch, we use a tomato conserve which is a homemade tomato paste made when the tomatoes are at their best. A good-quality tomato paste is an adequate substitute.

- 4-5 large beetroot
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, peeled and sliced
- 2 sprigs fresh lemon thyme
- 2 medium tomatoes, cut into chunks, or 2 tablespoons tomato conserve
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated orange zest
- pinch of ground cloves
- pinch of white pepper
- salt to taste

Wash the beetroot and boil until just cooked through (about 45 minutes). Be careful not to overcook while they are still in their skins or they can get a bitter woody flavour. Allow to cool then peel and slice.

Meanwhile, add the olive oil to a heavy-based saucepan and sweat the onions over a low heat with the thyme for 10-15 minutes until soft without browning. Add the beetroot and tomatoes, and cook for a few minutes more. Add the wine and cook until it has nearly evaporated then add the orange zest and cloves, and enough cold water to cover by about 2cm.

Bring to a gentle simmer and cook for a further 25-30 minutes then purée in a blender. Be very careful - getting burned by hot soup is not fun. Fill the blender only halfway and with a tea towel press down firmly on the lid. Pulse the blender a few times to get it going then blend on full speed for 30 seconds. Pass the puréed soup through a very fine sieve; this will give it a velvety texture, but more importantly will remove the thyme stalks. Return

to a clean saucepan and if too thick, let it down with a little more water. Add salt and a little white pepper to taste if needed. We serve the soup with a quenelle (a rounded spoonful) of goat's cheese whipped with a little finely chopped lemon thyme and a drizzle of lemon-infused olive oil. Serves 6.

## TAI TAPU DUCK WITH CARAMELISED SHALLOT TART WITH SHALLOT PURÉE

We get our ducks from Hurst Growers just down the road from us in Tai Tapu who rear free-range and certified organic Muscovy ducks. The meat is a lot tastier, as they are fed on organic sweetcorn and strawberries, which the producer also grows.

One of my all-time favourites, the confit is an old method of preserving so is a little salty. Don't be put off as this is an extremely satisfying dish and needs to be served with something sweet to balance it, my favourite being the pot-roast quince we make from the fruit of our trees.

Don't salt the duck legs too long and wash the salt mix off thoroughly before braising in rendered duck fat. You can use pork fat if you like, but duck fat, which is available from specialty food stores, is better and will keep for a long time in the fridge.

Always do more than you need and what you don't use can be stored completely covered in the duck fat for many weeks. Just carefully remove the duck legs from the fat and crisp up in a hot oven.

You can also cut the legs in half through the knuckle so you have a drumstick and a thigh if you wish so you can serve a smaller portion size. This is a good idea if you are doing more than two or three courses.

Here I serve the confit duck with thinly sliced pan-seared duck breast. Serve with whatever vegetables are in season. Maybe wilt some greens in a little olive oil or blanch some broccoli and simmer some carrots with a splash of water and a tablespoon of honey and butter. >

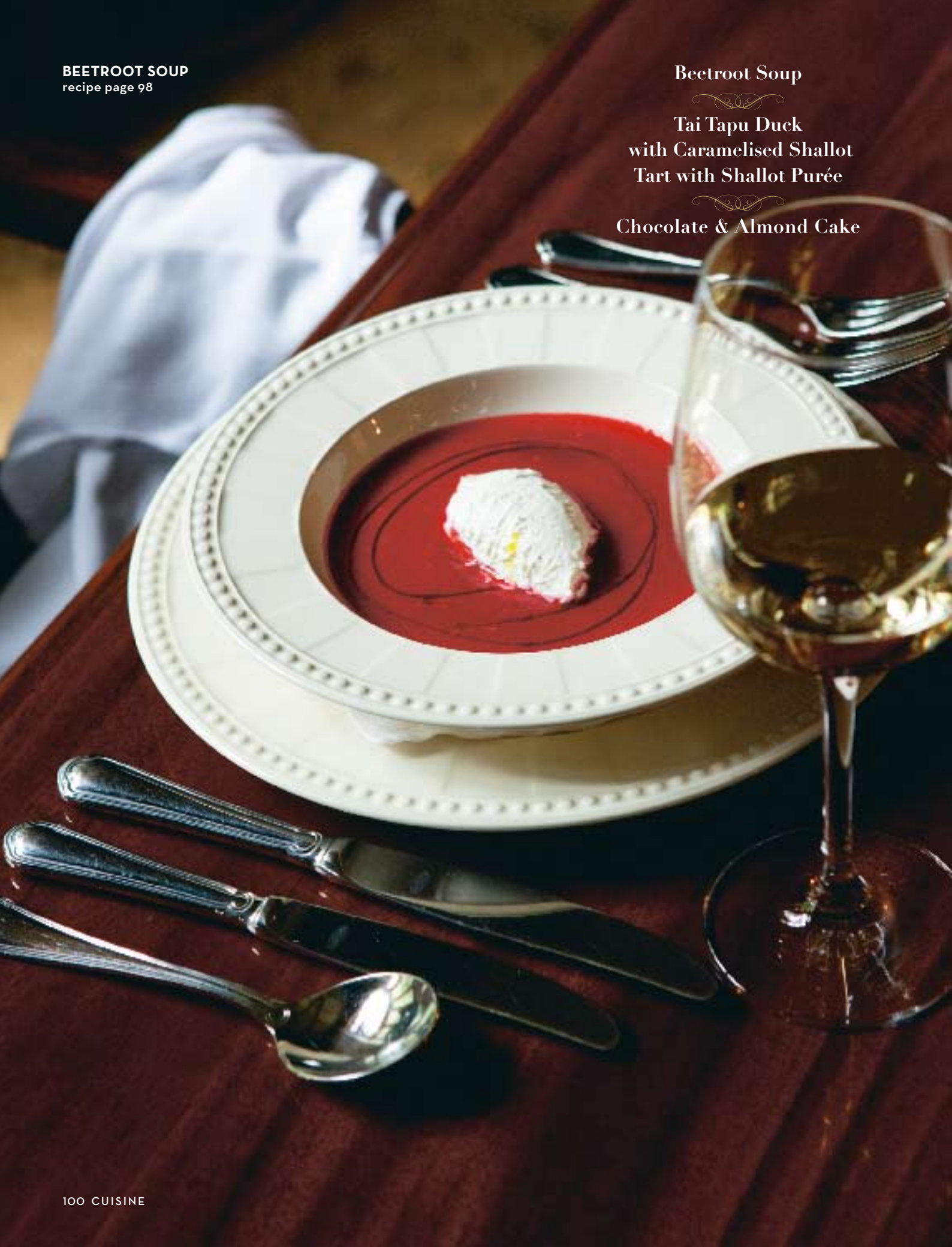


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Beetroot Soup

Tai Tapu Duck  
with Caramelised Shallot  
Tart with Shallot Purée

Chocolate & Almond Cake



**TAI TAPU DUCK WITH CARAMELISED SHALLOT  
TART WITH SHALLOT PURÉE**

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### **Duck Confit**

- 1 cup rock salt
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 4 cloves garlic, sliced
- 6 bay leaves, crushed
- 6 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 teaspoon ground or fresh minced ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- pinch of ground cloves
- 6 duck legs
- 1kg rendered duck fat

Combine the salt, sugar, pepper, garlic, herbs and spices. You may not need all this mixture so you can store what you don't need in a glass jar until needed again.

In a non-reactive tray lined with baking paper, evenly sprinkle some of the salt mixture to cover, place the duck legs on top and sprinkle as much again over the duck legs. Pack tightly, cover and refrigerate for 16-24 hours. Thoroughly rinse off the salt mixture under cold running water and pat dry with paper towels.

With a heavy knife or chopper, cut off the knuckles. Place a piece of baking paper in the bottom of a casserole or deep roasting dish followed by the duck legs so they fit in snugly. Heat the duck fat and pour over the legs. Cover with baking paper and foil or a tight-fitting lid and bake at 140°C-150°C for 3 hours or until the duck is tender.

Be careful not to cook the duck at too high a temperature or it will become dry. Check the duck after 1 hour; if the fat is simmering too vigorously, reduce the temperature so it cooks at a very gentle simmer. The slower the duck is cooked the better.

Remove from the oven and cool completely before refrigerating or remove the duck from the fat and reheat on a roasting tray lined with baking paper in a hot oven until crisp.

### **Pan-Seared Duck Breasts**

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon thyme leaves
- 1 tablespoon berry vinegar
- freshly ground black pepper
- 2-3 duck breasts
- flaky sea salt to taste

Combine the oil, thyme, vinegar and some pepper in a bowl and marinate the duck breasts overnight.

Take the breasts from the marinade and season with a little flaky sea salt. Place the breasts skin side down in a non-stick pan over low heat. Leave until the skin starts to caramelize and crisp (around 10 minutes). Be careful not to burn. This will render a lot of fat from the skin; discard any excess.

When the skin is nice and crisp turn the breasts over and cook until medium rare. Do not overcook or the meat will be tough and dry.

Rest the duck for about 5 minutes before slicing thinly across the grain.

### **To serve**

While the duck breasts are resting, put the confit duck legs in a hot oven until crisp. Heat some plates.

Arrange some vegetables alongside the tart (recipe follows) and place a duck leg against the tart as well. Place 4 slices of duck breast on top and drizzle around a little more shallot syrup if you wish. Fantastic with a full-bodied Pinot Noir. Serves 6.

### **Caramelised Shallot Tart with Shallot Purée**

This is a variation on a recipe by Matt Moran from *Aria* in Sydney. Everything can be made well in advance. I use mulberry vinegar, which we make here. You can substitute raspberry vinegar, sherry vinegar or even balsamic.

### **For the purée and pastry**

- 300g shallots, peeled and sliced
- 60g butter
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced
- 100ml cream
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 puff pastry sheet

Blanch the shallots in boiling water for 2 minutes then refresh in a sieve under cold running water. Put the butter and garlic in a saucepan and sweat the shallots over a gentle heat, stirring often, until soft and tender. Do not brown!

In a separate saucepan bring the cream to nearly boiling then add to the shallots, season to taste and purée

in a blender or food processor. Pass through a fine sieve if you wish and set the purée aside or refrigerate until ready for use.

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Cut the pastry into 6 discs about 6cm in diameter, place on a baking tray lined with baking paper and prick with the point of a knife or a fork. Refrigerate for about 30 minutes.

Place another piece of baking paper on top of the pastry and another baking tray the same size as the bottom one on top. This stops the pastry rising too much and ensures it is all the same height. Bake until golden (about 10 minutes). Cool and set aside until ready to use.

### **For the caramelised shallots**

- 500g shallots, peeled
- 250g caster sugar
- 30g butter
- 200ml berry vinegar

Boil the shallots in salted water for 6-8 minutes or until tender. Strain and allow to cool slightly then remove and discard the outer layer from each shallot with your fingers.

Place the sugar in a saucepan and stir constantly over medium heat until it starts to caramelize. Add the butter and stir until the mixture is golden brown. Add the whole shallots and vinegar, and continue cooking until the shallots are very tender and the liquid coats the back of a spoon. This may take 15-20 minutes. Be very careful as the liquid will be extremely hot.

To serve, warm the shallot purée in the microwave or in a saucepan on a low heat. Meanwhile, place the pastry discs in the oven to warm through. Heat the caramelised shallots. Place a spoonful of shallot purée on each of 6 warmed plates, put a pastry disc on top and spoon 3 shallots with a little syrup on the pastry. Serves 6.

## **CHOCOLATE & ALMOND CAKE**

This is a recipe I got from Stephanie Alexander, who has been a huge inspiration to me, although it was made famous by Elizabeth David and was based on the French classic *Reine de Saba* or *Queen of Sheba*

cake. It is made from ground almonds and therefore gluten free.

Easy to make and very moist, serve it simply with whipped cream, a ball of vanilla bean ice-cream or with a scoop of the rhubarb and raspberry sorbet. Yum!

- 250g good-quality dark chocolate, chopped
- 2 tablespoons brandy or cognac
- 2 tablespoons double espresso
- 200g butter, softened
- 200g caster sugar
- 200g ground almonds
- 6 eggs, separated
- Dutch cocoa or icing sugar for dusting

Preheat the oven to 160°C. Butter a 28cm springform cake tin and line with baking paper.

Combine the chocolate, brandy and coffee in a bowl over simmering water or in a double boiler. Stir when melted and add the butter and sugar. Mix well. Add the ground almonds and mix again very well.

Beat the egg yolks and stir into the chocolate mix off the heat. Beat the egg whites until firm. Stir a spoonful into the chocolate mix then fold in the rest of the whites and spoon into the prepared tin.

Bake for 40-45 minutes. The cake will set a little gooey in the centre. It will have developed a crust and be very fragile. Cool completely in the tin and invert on to a serving plate. Dust with Dutch cocoa powder or icing sugar, and serve with the sorbet.

### **Rhubarb Sorbet**

Rhubarb is such an underrated ingredient. Technically it is savoury but with the addition of sugar it turns into something magical and can be served with any number of dishes. I add a few raspberries left over from summer to make this delicious sorbet.

- 500g rhubarb, trimmed, washed and cut into 2cm pieces
- 500g frozen raspberries
- 300g caster sugar
- 500ml sugar syrup (250ml of hot water added to 250g caster sugar and stirred until dissolved)



**CHOCOLATE & ALMOND CAKE**

Mix the fruit and sugar together and place in a saucepan with a tight-fitting lid.

Place over a low heat and bring to a simmer, stirring often, until all the rhubarb and raspberries are soft and tender. Cool then purée in a blender, being careful not to overfill. Pass the purée through a sieve, discarding any seeds and stringy bits.

Add enough of the sugar syrup to balance the tart acidity of the fruit so you get a nice sweet and sour flavour. Taste continually and remember, not too sweet and not too sour.

Churn in an ice-cream machine or freeze overnight and, using a metal

scraper, smash up the frozen purée and process in a food processor until it resembles creamy slushy snow. Pour into a suitable container and place in the freezer covered with greaseproof paper and a tight-fitting lid until ready for use.

Allow at least 3 hours in the freezer before scooping with an ice-cream scoop or use a large tablespoon. Serves 12-16. ●

■ Kieran Scott and Tamara West flew from Auckland to Christchurch courtesy of Pacific Blue, flypacificblue.com