

## Food to live by

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Kookaburras start singing half an hour before dawn in this magical place, sending a wave of laughter across the beautiful country. I just love this area around the extinct volcano known as Wollumbin or, as named by Captain Cook, Mt Warning. So when I heard they were holding the retreat here, I was more than happy to volunteer as cook.

Now in its seventeenth year, the Gay Men with HIV Retreat manages to mix the everyday with the decadent to give those attending a unique and life-enriching experience. In addition to three full meals a day, the program provides an interesting mix of recreational, health and lifestyle workshops. I wanted the menu to be a reflection of the food I've made for myself and my friends over the years.

It was back in 1987 when a doctor pointed the bone at me and told me I would be dead from AIDS within two years. After the shock wore off, the first thing I did was to sit down with my three sisters and devise a management plan for my health. I went to a naturopath and a dietician.

I started meditating and I started cooking. I managed my condition for 15 years without drugs. Good food was one of the things that kept me alive.

In 1991, after a nine-month [flu](#) [1]A highly contagious and relatively common viral infection of the respiratory system, transmitted by infected droplets of moisture which may be spread through coughing and sneezing. Most people with flu recover but some go on to develop secondary infections such as pneumonia which may be fatal. that I couldn't shake, I travelled north to Lennox Head to stay with one of my sisters. Every morning we would eat half a pawpaw with lemon or lime juice. Within two weeks the flu symptoms had cleared.

Pawpaw, along with this recipe for Swiss muesli, makes for a very healthful start to the day.

### Swiss Muesli

- Raw muesli
- Oranges, juiced
- Natural yoghurt

#### METHOD

- Cover muesli with orange juice and soak overnight.
- In the morning, add yoghurt to taste.

In 1996, after my drunken 36th birthday celebration, a group of us went to Chinatown in Brisneyland for a recovery lunch. The dining room was full, with everyone eating the same dish: a plate of rice, a bowl of clear soup, a sliced 1?4 of steamed chicken on greens and a side of grated ginger in rice vinegar and garlic. I ordered what they were having.

Those early days of triple [combination therapy](#) [2]Highly Active AntiRetroviral Therapy ??? aggressive treatment of HIV infection using several different drugs together. made me sick, but this dish kept me going.

### Hainanese Chicken

- 1 whole chicken (about 1.5kg or size 15)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- 4 slices fresh ginger, peeled
- 4 spring onions, trimmed
- about 12 cups water
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil

1 bunch steamed bok choy  
Coriander sprigs

## METHOD

- Wash the chicken and remove any excess fat.
- Rub the inside of the cavity with salt and oil.
- Smash garlic and ginger slightly with the flat of a knife. Tie spring onions into a knot. Place garlic, ginger, and spring onions inside the chicken cavity.
- In a pot large enough to hold the chicken, bring water to boil. Add chicken, breast-side down. Cover and simmer for 30-40 minutes, turning the chicken halfway through the cooking process, until chicken tests done (juices from the thigh should run clear when pricked with a fork).
- Carefully remove the chicken, draining liquid from the body cavity back into the pot. Reserve the stock to make chicken rice. Plunge the chicken into iced water for 5 minutes to stop the cooking process and tighten the skin.
- Drain, rub with sesame oil, and let cool to room temperature.
- To serve, chop chicken into bite-sized pieces (the Chinese do this bone and all) and arrange on a platter. Garnish with steamed bok choy, and coriander sprigs.

## Chicken Rice

- 2 cups long-grain rice
- 2 tablespoons peanut oil
- 5 shallots, peeled and minced
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 3/4 cups reserved stock from cooking Hainanese chicken
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

## METHOD

- Wash and drain the rice in a colander. Let it stand for half an hour to dry.
- Heat oil in a wok. Add shallots and garlic. Stir-fry until fragrant.
- Add rice grains and stir-fry for 3-4 minutes, until glossy and fragrant.
- Transfer to a saucepan. Add chicken broth and salt. Bring to a boil over high heat and boil until the liquid level evaporates to the level of the rice and steam holes appear. Turn heat to low. Cover and simmer for several minutes. Serve with Hainanese chicken.

Another nice (but much simpler) recipe for an upset stomach is to grate a peeled apple, cover it with water and then eat it very slowly.

I do believe that if we had been invaded by the French we would be eating a lot more native animals.

Kangaroo is the lowest [cholesterol](#) [3]An essential component of cell membranes and nerve fibre insulation, cholesterol is important for the metabolism and transport of fatty acids and the production of hormones and Vitamin D. Cholesterol is manufactured by the liver, and is also present in certain foods. High blood cholesterol levels have been linked to heart disease and may be a side effect of some anti-HIV medications. meat and has no ill effects on the natural landscape, unlike the introduced farmed species that we eat. I love roo, especially roo rump, rare with mushrooms and thyme. But for ease of catering I made this easy bolognaise sauce and then made lasagne.

## Kangaroo bolognaise sauce

- 2 tablespoons oil
- 2 onions, diced

4 cloves garlic, diced  
500g kangaroo mince  
400g diced ripe tomatoes  
400g crushed tomato  
salt and pepper to taste

#### METHOD

- Sauté onion in oil till clear
- Sauté garlic
- Add kangaroo mince and sauté
- Add tomatoes and sauté
- Add crushed tomatoes. salt and simmer 1 1/2 hours
- n Garnish with fresh basil

Use in lasagne or with other pasta.

My favourite special occasion dessert would have to be chocolate beetroot cake. The recipe was given to me by a workmate and I've been making it for about 20 years. It is a winner with all those who try it and was a huge hit at this year's retreat.

### Chocolate Beetroot Cake

- 250g unsalted butter
- 250g sugar
- 6 eggs
- 250g wholemeal SR flour
- 2 beetroot, fresh, peeled and grated
- 400g dark cooking chocolate
- 30ml cream

#### METHOD

- Cream butter and sugar together.
- n Add eggs, one at a time.
- Fold in flour, fold in beetroot.
- Melt chocolate in microwave, fold 300g into mixture.
- Bake at 180°C for approximately 45 minutes.
- Rest 10 mins, turn out of cake tin and when cool, ice with remaining chocolate mixed with cream.
- Garnish with strawberries and extra cream.

What often makes a kitchen more enjoyable is the conversations you have with friends and family. Additionally, a task shared seems like no task at all. I encourage you to share your cooking and kitchen experience with a friend or loved one. We all need food and human interaction. So, what better place to combine the two?

Shane Duniam is an artist and chef by trade. He lives in the Northern Rivers of NSW.

**For details about the annual Gay Men with HIV Retreat or advice on the recipes listed here, contact ACON Northern Rivers (02) 6622 1555 (Free call in the Northern Rivers 1800 636 600) or visit [www.acon.org.au](http://www.acon.org.au) [4] for contact details and events in regional NSW.**

[living with HIV](#)  
[healthy living](#)  
[nutrition](#)

**Links:**

- [1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/350>
- [2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/96>
- [3] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/88>
- [4] <http://www.acon.org.au>