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130 Hood Road, Portarlington
(03) 5259 2492
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a show of mussels

Sharon Green finds seafood fever in the air as a vibrant coastal town on the Bellarine Peninsula prepares to showcase their biggest event of the year



+ A SHOW OF MUSSELS



The Portarlington Mussel Festival will run again in January and promises to deliver a fun-filled day on one of Victoria's most exquisite coast lines.

The non-profit, volunteer-run event aims to showcase the mussel capital of Victoria and promote the best of what Portarlington has to offer.

Portarlington is responsible for most of Victoria's supply of mussels which are distributed across Australia. The Bellarine mussel industry has been operating since 1982 and now employs more than 20 farmers.

Fresh mussels will be available to sample and purchase at the festival as well as information and demonstrations on how to cook them at home. Food lovers can unite as the event also showcases a range of local produce including wine, olives, salami and cheeses.

The festival, now in its sixth year, will welcome popular Australian musician Mike Brady as their main performance act,

+continued

Saturday 14 January 2012 9.30am- 5pm

Family Festival of Fun

portarlington

MUSSEL

festival

Presented by

Bellarine Peninsula Community Bank@Branch

SPECIAL GUEST PERFORMANCE BY MIKE BRADY

Over 7.5 hours of live entertainment including

- Live Music, Roving Acts, magicians & Children's Activities
- Dry Boat Event • Tug-O-War • Classic Cars
- Cooking Demonstrations • Mussel Farm Visits
- The Enterprize sailing ship
- Stalls, local beer & wine producers, a diverse range of foods and much more...
- Famous Australian Blue Mussels will be served in a wide variety of ways.

For a full event program please visit our website

portmusselfestival.com

Find us on Facebook



GARLIC MUSSELS

1 kg mussels bearded
1/2 cup of dry white wine

Aioli

12 cloves garlic Pinch of salt
4 egg yolks 2 cups of olive oil
Juice of 1/2 lemon

Discard any broken mussels and those that do not close after cleaning.

Place mussels and wine in a large saucepan over high heat and bring to boil. Cook just until mussels open, about 2-3 minutes. Separate shells, discarding one half. Loosen mussel from remaining shell remove beard and replace in shell.

Aioli

Grind garlic in a mortar with salt to form a pulp. Transfer garlic to a large bowl and work in the eggs thoroughly. Start adding oil very gradually, a few drops at a time, building the sauce bit by bit. It will become very thick. Toward the end add lemon juice and taste for salt.

Spoon a little aioli into each mussel shell, enough to cover the mussel, place mussels on tray and cook under hot grill until golden.

HANDLING OF MUSSELS

- Treat mussels like other shellfish and keep them refrigerated
- Store mussels between 0°C and 5°C. Lower temperatures will kill the mussels
- Cover the mussels with a clean wet towel to protect them from drying out whilst refrigerated
- Good eating shelf life is about 6 days from harvest date if they are kept refrigerated
- Some mussels will partly open with increasing time but live mussels will close again if the shells are lightly tapped or pushed together
- A little care is needed before cooking to make sure that only mussels in a fresh condition are cooked. Rinse mussels before cooking and discard any that you are not sure of
- Farmed mussels will not all open during cooking, you do not have to discard these. Just open with a knife after cooking
- Beards are more easily removed after steaming. However if mussels are to be cooked in a sauce you will need to pull out the beards prior to cooking

+ A SHOW OF MUSSELS



MUSSEL SALAD

2 kg mussels bearded	1/2 cup dry white wine
2kg Waxy Potatoes (such as Nicola or Dutch Creams)	
4 rashers smokey bacon	4 spring onions
Salt	Pepper
Parsley	Mustard Vinaigrette

Discard any broken mussels and those that are not closed after cleaning. Place 1/2 the mussels and wine in a large saucepan over high heat and bring to boil. Cook just until mussels open, about 2-3 minutes and remove from pan as they open. Repeat process with the remainder of the mussels. When cool enough to handle, remove mussel from the shell, remove the beard, and place in a bowl cover with plastic wrap to stop from drying out. Cook peeled potatoes in salted boiling water until cooked but still firm and then cut into large bite sized pieces. Cut bacon into strips and cook in fry pan until crisp. Cut spring onions into 2cm pieces. Toss all ingredients together with a mustard vinaigrette and salt and pepper to taste.



who will headline as part of an eight hour entertainment special.

Visitors will get the chance to visit mussel farms, board the Enterprize Sailing Ship, view the muscle cars or watch the dry boat event and traditional tug-o-war competition. Other family friendly activities include open-air market stalls, a vintage car display, photo and art exhibitions, and a range of children's activities including an animal farm and jumping castle.

Earlier this year, the festival was recognised for its passion and commitment required to run such an event and was subsequently awarded with the 2011 Geelong Advertiser Business Excellence Award for the Bellarine district. Festival secretary, Lindsay Noss, said this was a testament to the years of hard work contributed by the organising committee and team of volunteers.

Although the annual festival is still young, its success has been nothing short of impressive. The idea for the festival was born back in 2006 when a group of five women decided to organise a small community based event that could showcase Portarlington's local food and wine industries, and in particular, its mussel industry. And so the mussel festival was launched in 2007. "It exceeded all expectations and as a result, the committee decided to turn it into an annual event," said Mr Noss.

Following two more successful years, a community based committee was officially created including representatives from local services clubs, local businesses, the mussel industry and other community groups. "The local committee members formed to take over the running of the festival as it was seen as very important to the promotion of Portarlington and the Bellarine Peninsula," said Mr Noss.

The festival has grown rapidly since humble beginnings, with the first event attracting 5,000 visitors. It is now renowned as the biggest event in the local area and last year drew a record crowd of 15,000 that saw more than two tonnes of cooked mussel consumed and a further three tonnes of fresh mussel sold on the day.



Festival president Richard Underwood says its success is credit to the unique combination of local support and the ability of the event to bring the community together. "People come along and talk about the environment and community spirit – the community spirit is really great."

Mr Underwood says the festival gives locals the chance to mingle and feel connected as part of the local community. "It's a festival to be really proud of. It's a wonderful community, a beautiful place, and a really great way to showcase Portarlington."

+ details

Date Saturday, January 14, 2012

Time 9.30am to 5pm

Location Portarlington town centre

Cost Gold coin entry

www.portmusselfestival.com

MUSSELS WITH CHORIZO, TOMATO AND WHITE WINE

250g dry hot chorizo sausages, finely sliced	Extra virgin olive oil
6 shallots, finely diced	3-4 birdseye chillies
3 cloves garlic, finely diced	1 fresh bay leaf
6 saffron threads	2 fresh ripe tomatoes, finely diced
1½ cups chunky tomato sugo	500g packet medium-size pearl pasta or risoni pasta
300 ml dry white wine	1.5 kg black small mussels, de-bearded and scrubbed
4 tablespoons finely shredded continental parsley.	

Put the chorizo in a large heavy-based pan and fry for 3-4 minutes or until gold and crispy. Add 1 tablespoon of the oil to the pan and when hot add the shallots, chillies, garlic, bay leaf and saffron. Stir to combine and cook for 3-4 minutes. Add the diced tomato and the tomato sugo, stir to combine and cook over a low heat for 10 minutes. Remove pan from the heat and set aside. Bring a large pot of salted water to the boil and pour in the pearl pasta, cook for 5 minutes then drain. Add a splash of oil to the pasta and toss to combine. In a large pot heat the wine then throw in half the mussels and steam until open, about 2-3 minutes. Remove mussels from the pot and put in a colander. Steam open the remaining mussels in the same way, remove from the pot and reserve the cooking liquid. Check all mussels for beards and remove the top shell of most of the mussels leaving a few whole for garnish. Place the pot with the sausage mixture back on the heat, add the mussels and reserved liquid, the parsley and pearl pasta (or risone). Bring to a simmer and adjust with a little extra wine if too dry.

Recipes courtesy of Portarlington Mussel Festival