

cookbook

A Good Harvest: Recipes from the Gardens of Rural Women New Zealand (Random House, ISBN: 9781869797867).

This book on using surplus garden produce, mostly for preserves, follows on from Rural Women New Zealand's baking book, *A Good Spread*, which has become a regular reference for me.

That earlier book was decidedly sparse on some of the instructions for mixing and cooking, but this volume is a little more user-friendly for beginners.

I think it is great. It is a wonderful collation of recipes from rural women around the country. Rural Women New Zealand is a membership organisation and each recipe has the name of the contributor and the branch she belongs to.

There is an honest, rustic charm to this collection, from Great Aunt Rose's Lemon Marmalade to Grandma Rayner's Mustard Pickle and Aunt Mary's Savoury Silver Beet Muffins from Shelley Harrison of the Ashley Clinton Branch?

There are also handy hints including how to make and store your own pectin, which I have never seen



before. Ingredients are store cupboard standards, as you would expect from practical, rural women.

Photographs are mood only, not illustrative. Recipes are grouped by the main vegetable or fruit component.

Unfortunately, somebody decided that tried-and-true recipes for using surplus harvests was not enough and, in line with modern fashion, a recipe book is not complete without growing instructions. That would have been fine if the same effort had been put into collating the growing hints from the same country women, who no doubt have a vast collective reservoir of knowledge.

But it didn't happen that way. Each fruit or veg has a page of anonymous and often inadequate growing information, cobbled together from sources including the infamous *Tui NZ Fruit Garden*. Just ignore all that. You can get better information elsewhere, but the recipes are good and justify buying the book. It is, however, a bit of a shame the publisher wouldn't invest in a better-quality cover – mine is bent and creased already and for a book I will probably continue to use, it will look old before its time.

Abbie Jury

tongue teaser

We try before you buy

New Zealand Kettle Korn sent us three bags of its sweetish confection to try. Apparently, kettle corn is a New Zealand classic invented by German immigrants back in the day. Who knew? No one here, anyway. That didn't put us off trying it, though.

Advertising features co-ordinator Piglet (otherwise known as Kay Shanley) was one of the first to send us her opinion: "Delicious popcorn – not as dry as most popcorn. Nicely flavoured and not too sweet."

Advertising consultant Amber Herbert agreed. "Yum! Just when the sweet wears off, the salt hits you. It's very fresh and has a good texture – not too soft and not too crunchy. Would definitely buy that next time I am getting out a few DVDs!"

Reporter Angela Cuming went a step further: "The best thing to come out of New Zealand since Dan Carter."

Available from Rialto cinemas and most New Worlds and Pak 'N Saves. A bag (six serves) is about \$3.50.

Deborah Sloan



in season

There are two main varieties of rocket grown commercially – standard rocket and wild rocket.

Wild rocket is growing rapidly in popularity and is more common than the standard variety. And it has a stronger flavour. Wild rocket looks totally different than standard rocket. It has dark green, deeply lobed leaves and has a spicy piquant flavour. It is ideal to mix with other lettuce leaves and is commonly found in commercially available lettuce leaf mixes.

Mesclun is the French term given to a mixture of tender young gourmet salad greens. Mesclun contains combinations of salad leaves and may include lettuce and herbs.

Mizuna has a spicy piquant flavour and is great mixed with other lettuce. It is medium green with deeply jagged leaves. Mizuna, another salad green, is very similar but has a slightly stronger flavour.

Red chard leaves are green with red veins.

They have a faint beet-like flavour and are especially good in warm salads.

Baby spinach has juicy ruffled leaves with a mild spinach flavour. Spinach is particularly nutrient-dense, with wide health benefits.

When preparing a salad choose clean, crisp leaves. It must be kept in the fridge in a plastic bag or in the crisper. Make sure the leaves aren't squashed. To prepare, remove any coarse or wilted leaves. If the leaves get a little limp you can easily revive them. Soak the leaves in warm



water for three or four minutes. Cover and refrigerate for about 20 minutes.

As most of these new varieties are grown indoors they are available all year round.

■ From *Vegetables, a User's Guide*, by Glenda Gourley for Horticulture New Zealand. For details, see vegetables.co.nz

The blood orange (*Citrus sinensis*), which you can find at New World (and grown in California), has crimson, almost blood-coloured flesh. The colour is due to anthocyanins pigments more commonly found in flowers and other fruits, not in citrus. Sometimes the rind has a reddish hue, as these do here. The skin can also be tougher and harder to

peel than other oranges. While all oranges are likely to be a hybrid between the pomelo and the tangerine, blood oranges began as a mutation of the sweet orange. They're less acidic and milder in flavour to a common orange. Chief of staff Wayne Timmo was the first to give them a go. "Striking colour. Not as sweet as a naval orange, but nice."

Next came business editor Andrea Fox.

"I've read about them in books, but I've never seen one. It looks like someone's dipped them in blood. They're amazing. They haven't got a lot of taste compared to an Australian or New Zealand orange. Children might like them better, because they're not so acidic."

"It looks like something out of Hammer House of Horror," technology reporter Chris Gardener said. "Maybe something you'd apply to a monster's face after he's bitten somebody. It's a more subtle orange flavour."

Feature writer Tracey Cooper had the final say.

"They're quite – bland's not the right word... but quite a flat taste."

Deborah Sloan

