

**ONE TO MAKE AT HOME**  
**VEAL SIRLOIN WITH STEWED TOMATOES AND PESTO**



*Gently cook down a selection of tomatoes here to create a nice chunky tomato sauce. You could serve this with chicken, pork or a robust fish – or even serve it as it is, as a side dish or starter.*

**WHAT YOU'LL NEED**

- 4 veal sirloins, weighing about 150-200g each
- Vegetable or corn oil for brushing
- 4 medium shallots, peeled, halved and sliced
- 4 cloves of garlic, peeled and crushed
- a few sprigs of oregano or marjoram
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 350-400g tomatoes (assorted varieties)

**FOR THE PESTO**

- 20g pine nuts, lightly toasted
- 50-60g fresh basil leaves and any soft stalks
- 1 clove of garlic, peeled and crushed
- a good pinch of sea salt
- 3tbsp freshly grated Parmesan or mature pecorino
- 100-120ml extra virgin olive oil (preferably a sweeter olive oil)

**SERVES 4**

First make the pesto by putting the pine nuts, basil, garlic and salt in a liquidiser and coarsely blend. Add the cheese and blend again briefly, then transfer to bowl.

Heat the olive oil in a thick-bottomed saucepan and gently cook the shallots, garlic and oregano for 3-4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, cut the tomatoes into even-sized chunks and add to the shallots. Season, cover with a lid and cook on a low heat for 8-10 minutes, giving the occasional stir, until the tomatoes have softened. Re-season if necessary and keep warm with the lid on.

Meanwhile, heat a ribbed griddle, barbecue or heavy frying pan and brush with the vegetable oil. Season the veal and cook for about 4-5 minutes on each side, depending on the thickness, keeping them nice and pink.

To serve, spoon the tomatoes on to warmed serving dishes, slice the veal and lay on top; spoon the pesto on to the veal.



**Joris Minne**

**REVIEW**

**Rhubarb Fresh Food Cafe**

2 Little Victoria Street (corner of Hope Street), Belfast BT2 7JH. Tel: 028 9020 0158

**A**ll the recent talk of economic upturns, of house price crashes bottoming out and green shoots sprouting among the wreckage of our few remaining industries won't do at all. This upbeat kind of language does not come naturally to Ulster folk. We are much happier kicking car tyres, muttering about the state of things and putting on a serious face.

Even during the white-heat glow of our economic boom a couple of years ago, most of us still shook our heads into our pints bemoaning the breakdown of traditional family values, the emergence of insolence as a virtue and how envy and greed now drove the thirtysomethings rather than the noble engines of application, ability and ambition that lifted us out of our grey and hopeless towns in the blighted years of the Seventies and Eighties.

For those of us who look back on those days with some fondness, the idea that Northern Ireland was turning into northern California was a frightening prospect.

Suddenly everybody with a semi was going to be a millionaire and the Northern Ireland BMW-per-head ratio here was higher than in Los Angeles. The crash of last year, however, meant a possible return to the stable old days when a pint was 35p and traffic jams were something you heard about on Radio 2.

In Berlin there are bars and restaurants that exploit this nostalgia. There is a restaurant in the east of the city that serves up the same old fatty pork and beetroot stodge as it did pre-Wall fall.

Its prices reflect the old days of communist subsidy and its plastic table cloths and grimy walls are a reassuring monument for the older generations who believe that climate change, Usain Bolt and self-clean kitchens are the work of the evil capitalist West and would never have been allowed under the old regime.

Belfast doesn't have the same knack for celebrating, marking or commemorating its immediate past. That's because it's immediate past isn't completely in the past yet.

But one restaurant, possibly the smallest in Belfast, has had the good sense to pluck one or two dishes from the last few decades, give them a bit of welly and serve them at incredibly Seventies-style prices.

Rhubarb on the corner of Hope Street is a tiny cubbyhole of a place with little booths, no drinks licence and a man in the kitchen who wears a chef's whites.

Nor does it have a credit card link, which means you need to bring a bit of (but not much) cash. It might look like a funky taxi-man's caff from the outside, but you'd be mistaken if you thought it was just another Ulster-fry eatery. Because what goes on in the minuscule kitchen would make much bigger operations weep.



A recent couple of lunches in Rhubarb proved that just because you can get a bacon sandwich in a place doesn't mean the rest of the stuff is fast or rubbish. A plate of bacon, cabbage and mash was memorable in so far as I can't remember having had as good a version of it anywhere else.

It was one of the meals I would put down on my desert-island list of top favourites. Among Pier 36's langoustines, Cayenne's

confit of duck and Gourmet Burger Bank's Lebanese lamb burger I would have to put Rhubarb's plain-looking but gobsmacking bacon, cabbage and mash.

Top chefs often advise restaurants to create an iconic dish, something people will always want to go back for. This is the one. But of course, not all of you like bacon, cabbage and mash so thankfully, there's more at lunch time than this.

The warm potato salad, for instance, consists of freshly sautéed new spuds, chorizo, lots of green leaves and dressing with bite.

The risotto shares some of the chorizo flavours and is a thick (though light and creamy) affair bursting with flavours and gentle texture.

There are daily specials, including the likes of a chicken and root-vegetable pie whose flakey pastry hat covers a very generous, deep and rich stew featuring carrots, celery, onions and much more. Among the specials are desserts that shore up the quality values of the place – crème brulee, chocolate fudge cake and so on.

But many office workers, students and