

Marriage's Charcuterie / Delicatessen

87 Kitchener Road, Milford, Auckland

I could barely contain my excitement when I learned that **Nigel Marriage** had opened a charcuterie / delicatessen in Auckland. A true master chef, Nigel has cooked in some of the most respected restaurants in Britain, restaurants at which one pays vast sums and books well in advance.

He was Head Chef to Raymond Blanc at Le Manoir aux Saisons, claimed by many experts to be the best in the UK.

Lifestyle prompted him to relinquish his glittering career and emigrate to New Zealand. And we are fortunate to have him. **Nigel** is a perfectionist, doing everything properly and making everything from scratch. He makes his own sausages, using natural casings and, eschewing rusk, binding the meat with egg. Meat pies he makes daily with his own all butter pastry. He even cracks walnuts (from Hawkes Bay) himself to ensure their freshness.

A charcuterie, from the French chair cuit or cooked meat, specialises in pork products in their many guises. Rillettes (pronounced ree yet), potted belly pork, are a standard charcuterie item. Nigel makes pork and duck rillettes. Beneath the traditional seal of lard the meat is stringy and fatty as true rillettes should be. They may sound unappetising but they are excellent full flavoured, perfectly seasoned, with the meat up to the fore. Pates, too, are a charcutier's staple. Mushroom and cashew nut, and smoked mackerel are among the changing range. Chicken and Pistachio Ballotine is another classic preparation; a mixture of veal, pork and chicken livers is moulded around an apricot and pistachio stuffing, wrapped in a cloth and poached.

In the delicatessen line **Nigel** makes membrillo, or quince paste, rhubarb relish, apple, ginger and brandy preserve, and four fruit marmalade of limes, grapefruit, oranges and lemons, slicing the fruit and soaking it for twenty four hours to extract the bitterness. Perhaps the most thrilling of all are the restaurant quality dinners for two which Nigel prepares every day. Not surprisingly they are quintessentially European in style: Oxtail braised with Chardonnay and Root Vegetables; Duck legs simmered in Red Wine and Raspberries; Steak, Kidney and Oyster Stew; and Venison Casserole and a Bitter Chocolate Sauce, for example. This later may sound a novel combination but the addition of bitter chocolate to game is actually a traditional Italian method of giving body, colour and richness to a sauce.

Nigel will make special requests, and will prepare outside catering for small groups – lunches, dinners or exquisite finger food such as that served at le Manoir.

Once a month there is a tutored tasting of a particular line stocked in the delicatessen.