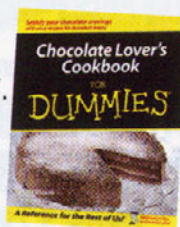


FOOD & WINE

CALLING ALL CHOCOLATE AFFICIONADOS...



We needn't use the fact that Easter is approaching as an excuse for thinking chocolate chocolate chocolate.... That well-known series of black and yellow 'for dummies' books, now includes the 'CHOCOLATE LOVERS COOKBOOK FOR DUMMIES'.



Carole Blooms' definitive guide is a must for your culinary library. With an array of fabulous recipes and pages of things I never dreamt I would know about chocolate, I would not be without it. Available in paperback at £14.95.



2000 acres of organically farmed land in lush Lambourne produce the greatest tasting meat you will find; beef, lamb, mutton, pork, gammon, bacon and poultry.... and

for the discerning canine in your life, even organic doggy bags are available! For home delivery, order on line at www.sheepdroveshop.com or call 01488 71659.

Also, for a great day out, visit Sheepdrove for lambing day on 13th March, 11am-3pm. (Remember to take your wellies, it's muddy!) Sheepdrove Farm, Lambourne, Berkshire

'DULCE DE LECHE'....

This soft caramel confection, a luscious export of Mexico, Central and South America is finding its way onto every trendy dessert menu now. It is also sold in deli's and supermarkets, in small jars for large amounts of money; the secret of dulce de leche (which translates as 'milk jam') is a simple one. You can make it yourself at home using this traditional recipe, and flavour it to your own taste with vanilla, cinnamon, coffee or citrus zest.

Combine 2 litres of whole milk with 450ml of golden caster sugar in a heavy-bottomed pan. Stir over a low heat to dissolve sugar, heat to a gentle simmer. Combine 6ml bicarbonate of soda with 50ml water and stir into the milk mixture. Reduce the heat and cook the milk uncovered at a low simmer. Stir gently periodically without incorporating the foamy layer that forms on the surface. The mixture will turn a light tan colour and will thicken. Continue simmering until the colour is rich, the texture is that of condensed milk and it is reduced to about 500ml - this may take up to 90 minutes. Strain immediately into a jar, cool completely and refrigerate for up to 3 weeks.

It may not feel like it, but spring IS here, so look out for these seasonal gastronomic treats.

GARIGUETTE STRAWBERRIES

are available from mid April for about 4 weeks.

Similar to wild strawberries they are small, soft and very sweet - the most delicious of all varieties.

New seasons' ASPARAGUS

is wonderful served chilled with minted mayonnaise and crumbled crispy bacon.



For an indulgent

dessert in minutes; crumble ginger nuts into a sundae glass, drizzle with Amaretto liqueur and top with crème fraiche and quartered APRICOTS.

Repeat the layers a second time.

REBLOCHON CHEESE

is at its best at this time. Originating in the Alpine pastures of Savoie in France, it is made from unpasteurised cows' milk. A semi-soft creamy cheese with a nutty flavour, it is best enjoyed at room temperature; especially good with sourdough bread.



JERSEY ROYALS

reign supreme amongst new potatoes. For a lighter variation on the traditional mayonnaise based salad, toss warm potatoes in a blend of extra virgin olive oil, balsamic vinegar, wholegrain mustard, freshly ground black pepper, rock salt and chopped chives.

January 2005. WORDS: CAROLYN ROBB "Vanilla" magazine