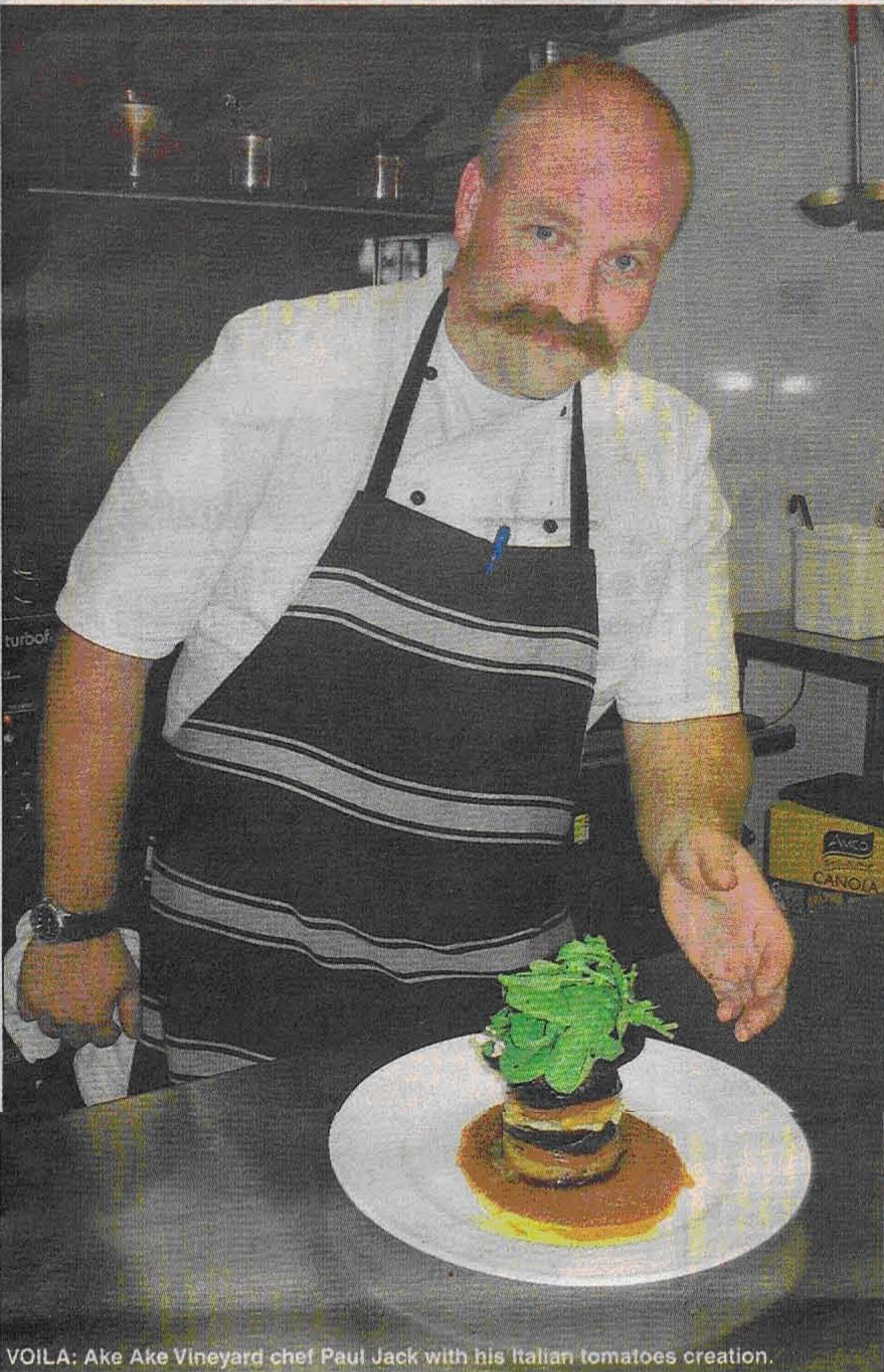


Flavour

NORTHERN NEWS & BAY CHRONICLE FEATURE



Chef's sauce exposed



VOILA: Ake Ake Vineyard chef Paul Jack with his Italian tomatoes creation.

Aubergine and Red Pepper Torte

Roast Tomato Sauce:
 2 Tins whole peeled tomatoes
 2 Discs of Thai palm sugar
 200ml Fish sauce
 Roasted Coriander, Fennel, Cummin Seeds
 2 Red chillies seeded
 4 Cloves garlic
 2 Thumbs ginger
 2 Red peppers
 2 Red onions
 Lime juice
 1 Bunch fresh coriander
 6 Fresh tomatoes
 Peanut oil
 Put all ingredients into a roasting pan and slow cook for half an hour. Blend and pass through strainer/sieve.

Torte ingredients:
 1 Med. sized aubergine
 1 Red capsicum
 1 Beef steak tomato
 Hallumi cheese
 Portobello mushroom
 Herb pesto
 Fresh rocket leaves

Preparation:
 Slice 1 aubergine, sprinkle with salt and let sit - this draws out any bitterness in the aubergine. Rub with oil and cook in oven for 15mins. Roast one red capsicum in oven till skin browns then place in bowl and cover with glad wrap - when cold peel off outside skin and discard the seeds.

To assemble torte:
 Layer the following, in this order, in a round metal ring/tube: aubergine, capsicum, tomato, aubergine, hallumi cheese, capsicum, tomato, aubergine. Top with herb pesto. Cook in oven at 180 degrees for 15-20 mins.

To Serve: Place ladle of tomato sauce in centre of plate. Place torte in centre of sauce and remove metal ring. Garnish with Portobello mushroom and fresh rocket leaves - enjoy!



Mama's back in business

GOURMET FOODIE Simone Liley has always had a taste for the old sauce.

She doesn't try to hide her addiction and talks with relish about the fact that she'll even crack a bottle with breakfast now and then of Mama Liley's home preserves that is, in case you thought we meant anything else.

It all began in Hawkes Bay over a decade ago when Simone's brother-in-law decided to grow his own veges. Suddenly there were tomatoes everywhere. Never one to let good food go to waste, Simone dusted off some old family recipes and got busy in the kitchen gradually perfecting her own style tomato sauce and relish.

Demand grew faster than the tomatoes with friends and family requesting more of that "what do you call it sauce?" At which point Simone promptly named it Mama Liley's as she thought it conjured up romantic images of an Italian woman happily stirring fresh herbs into a pot of simmering tomatoes.

Hand written labels affixed to recycled jars completed the lovingly handcrafted appeal and cheeky fans began placing orders well in advance of their birthdays and Christmas.

Eventually Simone moved away from the area and for reasons no one can quite remember Mama Liley never made it to the new country.

That is until recently when Simone visited an ex-chef friend turned tomato grower.

Faced with an abundance of tomatoes and his wistful request for some Mama Liley's, Simone once again got preserving. Mama Liley's was back and better than ever!

Encouraged by her friend's praise and equally flattering feedback from other friends in the hospitality trade, Simone decided to get serious about production.

Working from a registered kitchen, using a standard jar and a more professional label, she's taken Mama Liley's to a new level and is now looking to sell her product.

Simone recently presented her wares to the team who manage the farmers market and after a nervous wait was rapt to hear it's been approved for sale. She hopes to have her stall up and running by mid-March but in the meantime anyone keen to try her product can reach her at mamalileys@ihug.co.nz

IN THE six months he's been at Ake Ake Vineyard, chef Paul Jack has already impressed diners with two new menus and he's about to change it again to incorporate the best of the new season ingredients.

His favourite style of food? "I don't like food that's pretentious. I like simple food with an emphasis on freshness and flavour. Simplicity is the key".

He keeps the menu small because it enables them to make everything onsite, "except the ice cream - we don't have the machine for it".

One of the more popular dishes on the current menu is his tomato and red pepper torte served on sweet roasted tomato sauce and garnished with portobello mushroom and rocket salad.

The sauce was, until this article, a well guarded secret and is something he's perfected over his 20 years in the kitchen.

"I use Roma tomatoes because they're naturally sweet. I roast the sauce in the oven rather than boiling it in a pot because it's a nice dry heat. It's a really aromatic sauce with a high colour."

And not only is it a deliciously colourful dish, Paul says it's a good meal to serve when you're entertaining because you can prepare the dish in advance so you're not slaving in the kitchen all night.

His other great tip is that you can thin the sweet roasted tomato sauce with beef stock and serve it as a soup.

And for the finishing touch: "Garnish it with herb pesto."

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