



Lynwood: a strong sense of taste

EPISODE II. LYNWOOD PRESERVES. Lick your fingers. Robbie Howard is taking her jam to the world.



ROBBIE HOWARD in the Lynwood Café Jam Room.

ROBBIE HOWARD GREW up with a fig tree outside her back door. Every morning, it was her little brother's job to climb the tree and beat the starlings to the ripe figs. Robbie suspects that the preserving ethic is in her blood. "The day your mother and I got married" her father once told her "your grandmother was bottling apricots in the morning because she couldn't bear to waste them".

"I do love the land" Robbie confesses. "And for me one of the most beautiful days I could have is to go out with a bucket and pick some fruit. You find an old tree and often they're much harder to work with because they're knobbly and the fruit's hard to peel, but the flavour is really good."

Robbie began making jam after she closed her restaurant in Goulburn. The Hume Highway bypass had reduced takings by 20% and she was restless and looking for something to do. A friend and mentor Anders Ousback suggested jam-making, and gave her a beautiful copper pot, and she started doing seven jars in a batch. Seven jars at a time however, is a slow way to make jam for sale.

Lynwood Café began as an outgrowth of that jam-making. "We were thinking in the beginning we would just do scones, jam and cream or something here" Robbie recalls. Now, with the café firmly established Robbie is putting her energy into relaunching the *Lynwood Preserves* range of jams and preserves.

"It's something that I've been working at for ten years and I've never really had time to concentrate on its own identity. I'd just like to take it to the next stage" she explains. "What I want to try and do is actually really work on the fruit and on the flavour and I think it's got to be of a good quality if I'm going to do it. I'm not interested in mass production for the sake of it, so it's going to be quite hard to manage that. I'm getting all the recipes much tighter, even having them on the computer, with everything catalogued and organised. You can't just say we'll make commercial quantities by throwing it in a 44 gallon drum and hoping it works."

As Robbie explains, there is science in jam making. You need to have the correct pH, you have to know what the Brix (sugar) levels are and you use a refractometer to do that, and you need a certain temperature. When you get those three correct, your jam will set.

"You come back to the classics, because the old people knew what worked. If you try and be too clever and mix exotic fruits in with it and things ..." Robbie leaves the thought in the air, then continues. "There've been generations of people who cooked from the CWA cookbook, and I don't think the CWA are ever given enough credit. I could spend a lot of time saying, 'I've adapted this from the CWA cookbook'." **RF** Fred Harden

YOU CAN BUY *Lynwood Preserves* from the *Lynwood Café* and through *Nicholas Foods*. 44 Clovelly Road, Randwick, NSW Ph: 02 9399 6632. *Lynwood Preserves* also have their own website, www.lynwoodpreserves.com.au with ordering details. (We must declare here that Regional Food are helping Robbie with her new website.)

