



Downunder Gardening: Saturday in the garden, Sunday in the kitchen

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An autumn Saturday in the garden here in New Zealand invariably means spending Sunday in the kitchen. This weekend has been no exception. Yesterday's harvest included pears, apples, figs and a few kilo of still-green tomatoes. We also brought home Lebanese cucumbers, peppers, watercress, leeks, beetroot, carrot thinnings, lettuce, beans, a pumpkin and a couple of zucchini. The tomatoes are now green tomato chutney. We will eat the best of the figs fresh, but I slow roasted the others with honey and a sprinkling of cinnamon. The apples have been stewed for breakfasts ? one bowl for now and a container for the freezer. We ate a couple of pears fresh last evening with creamy blue cheese, which must be one of the best tasting food combinations ever. Others are in the oven right now, roasting for adding to the salad we're having for dinner. It's a real harvest salad: fresh watercress from the stream that runs through our property at Matakana; baked, peeled and quartered beetroot; sliced Lebanese cucumber; avocado grown by my friend Jude south of Auckland; and crumbled vintage sheep feta bought locally but made in Invercargill. And, of course, the pears. If we're still hungry after all that, there's always the honey-roasted figs and yoghurt. Savoury roasted pears are delicious. This is a recipe from Annabel Langbein's book 'Eat Fresh?'. Halve and core two just ripe pears and slice into wedges. Mix together 1 tablespoon of olive oil, 1 teaspoon of rice vinegar, 1 teaspoon of sugar, salt and pepper. Add the pears and toss to coat. Then spread in a single layer in a baking dish and roast for 20 minutes at 200 °C. Annabel then adds half a cup of fresh walnut pieces and roasts another 10 minutes. Unfortunately, I didn't have the walnuts ? a situation I hope to remedy when I visit my sister Jane on Banks Peninsula, near Christchurch, next week. She has 12 walnut trees which looked loaded last time I saw them.

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