



The peppermint green walls, colonnaded veranda and large garden urns of Denise-Cowburn-Levy's Edwardian Fresnaye home provide an elegant backdrop for entertaining and the celebration of special occasions. It's both the family home and cookery school of this successful business woman and ex-international model.

Celebrating the holiday season with a garden lunch, her guests are assured of the healthiest dishes and a combination of intriguing flavours. "I love to bring out the essence of each ingredient and not smother anything in sauce," says Denise.

Denise's style is very international, informed by her work as a photographic model in Germany during the early part of her career. She returned home to run her own photographic production company hosting photo teams from around the world. As the business expanded, she was joined by her husband Gavin, a restaurateur, who helped take the company further.

"When I was working with international crews, we'd entertain two or three nights a week," says Denise. "I suddenly realised that the best part



Elsa Mungifa, Massimo Spazzoli, Jane Jones Gibbs, Graham Cowburn, Denise Cowburn-Levy, Mthorhi Mwebesa, Katy Addison and Nicole Dawson

Menu

WOK-FRIED ASIAN GREENS
WITH GINGER AND
LIME DRESSING

2000

BEETROOT-CURED
NORWEGIAN SALMON
WITH HORSERADISH
CRÈME FRAICHE

2000

GRIDDLED HALLOUMI
WITH SMOKY VINE
TOMATOES AND OLIVES

2000

COCONUT AND VANILLA
PANNA COTTA

LEMON AND LIME SORBET

of my job was the entertaining and the sharing of food. Then I started taking classes with Liam Tomlin and was absolutely hooked."

Three years ago, Denise turned a cluster of rather dark rooms at the back of her home into a state-of-the-art kitchen where she could hold classes. She also caters for special functions in the formal dining room next door and on the large terrace overlooking the garden.

"I'm obsessed with food and cooking. Even when I'm on the treadmill, I watch cooking videos. I particularly love Asian food for its complex flavours. I like to cook vegetables, for instance, by simply blanching them, and then serving them with a Vietnamese spicy dressing that brings out their sweetness. I also enjoy



the way they eat in Italy, family style, with platters in the centre of the table so everyone can help themselves.

"My kitchen has always been the heart of my home, a place where friends and family gather for the preparation and eating of fabulous food," she says. "I think that cooking helps people connect, where for a short while, you forget your problems as you focus on cutting with a sharp knife or tasting a complex sauce to find the exact ingredient to make it work," she says. ▷