



SALAD OF SMOKED SALMON, AVOCADO AND MICRO GREENS

- Serves 4
- 500g hot smoked salmon or trout
- 2 avocados, sliced**
- 3 cups micro greens or endive
- ½ cup finely chopped chives**
- 1 punnet cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 lemon**
- 15ml chardonnay vinegar
- 150ml olive oil**
- ½ tsp brown sugar
- Salt and pepper**

Break up salmon and put in a bowl with the avocados, chives, tomatoes and leaves. In a second bowl, squeeze the juice from the lemon and whisk in the vinegar, oil, sugar and seasoning to taste.

Pour enough of the dressing over the salad to moisten the leaves but not drown them. Gently toss with your fingers then arrange on four plates.

RECIPES INSPIRED BY BÉCASSE RESTAURANT; STYLING SOUTH KITCHEN; PHOTOGRAPHY DOUG SHERRING

No one nose better

A rum blender with 300 distinct smells at her command.



Joy Spence uses her fine-tuned sense of smell. JANNA DIXON

Joy Spence, the master blender for Appleton's Estate rum in Jamaica, was recently in New Zealand to promote the opening of a 30-year-old Appleton's rum, and to make the world's most expensive cocktail — at \$1000 a glass. Rum, she says, is more about science than it about the “yo-ho-ho”.

How did you become a master rum blender?
I joined the company as a chemist, and had to work very closely with the master blender — who looks at the sensory side of blending — and I had to look at the chemical process. I became very fascinated with the whole idea so I went into training for 17 years, then took over the role of master blender when he retired.
So you don't just chuck some Bacardi in with the Captain Morgan and see what comes out?
Ah, no. It involves understanding the different styles of rum, and

marrying them over a period of time to create very unusual flavours and aromas. We have so many different styles of rum — for example, we have a rum so unique that 0.05 per cent in a blend makes a difference in the overall profile and taste.
Was there a lot of first-hand research required before you got into this business?
No, I never drank rum until I joined Appleton's. In those days it wasn't fitting for women to be drinking rum, it wasn't seen as something ladylike to do. A ladylike drink was water, no rum. But things have changed significantly. And a lot of women have been drinking rum in Jamaica. I had this preconceived idea that it would make me so drunk, so sick, but I didn't realise it could be rich and mellow.
Do you have to taste a lot of it now? That wouldn't be a difficult job.
No, I do my testing by nosing. Rum has a top note created from

the fermentation and distillation process and the complex notes, or bottom notes, which result from the interaction of the rum with the barrel.
You can pick up several hundred different aromas in a rum. I myself can distinguish 300 different smells.
Does that sense of smell come naturally?
You have to have a natural gift, but you have to be trained to be able to differentiate so many aromas from each other as well.
Is the position of master blender an unusual one for a woman?
Very strange. It's a male-dominated profession. I'm the first female in this industry to be a master blender. I am proud. And I didn't have much difficulty being accepted because they knew me as a chemist and I was being tutored by the master blender. I thought I would be in a lab with beakers and test-tubes, not doing this.
— Michelle Coursey



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