

Emily Bunbury

Highlighting great homegrown produce

WALK PAST THE EXPANSIVE LAWNS, up the steps, underneath the stone portico, through the front door (aha, there it is; at the side of the house)—and step into the past. Here since the mid-1800s, the flagstone floors under your feet have been smoothed by time and thousands of people moving through these rooms. The mingled scent of aged leather book bindings and cosy wood fires permeates the air, while the gleaming wood of ornately carved furniture invites you to sit, stay a while and snuggle into the velvet scatter cushions. Welcome to the home of William and Emily McClintock Bunbury and their family.

Lisnavagh House & Gardens is managed by Emily and William alongside a hardworking and dedicated team. And though grandeur may be your first impression, homeliness soon comes to the fore. With Lisnavagh in the family since 1702, William arrived on the scene in 2000 to enervise it with a commitment to restore the natural balance of the estate's gardens, woodlands and farm—while initiating a host of new enterprises to revitalise the property. One such regeneration project is in the Farmyard, where Tudor Gothic stone buildings retain hints of their working past; an antique forge here, farm implements of yesteryear there. These days, the Farmyard is a place to stay, sleep, breathe, create... and eat excellent pizza.

Emily Bunbury explains, "Back in the day when many people worked on the farm, the forge at Lisnavagh Farmyard once had a community focus. At break time the workers would gather at the Forge, which was very warm, bringing their lunches and tea. Today we have turned it into a pizza oven, soon to be a café—so people can still come to the Farmyard at Lisnavagh, enjoy the community feel and have something to eat!"

Much like the repurposed forge, Emily's recipe is modern but with a traditional twist. "This tomato base recipe was passed down through my own family; today, I use it as an essential element of our pizzas. I've been cooking it at Lisnavagh for a number of years now, and I like it because

it's a healthy meal that gives my children pleasure; it also means we can grow all the ingredients in the tunnel and the walled garden at Lisnavagh.

"My grandmother was a keen gardener, spending a lot of time in her own walled garden where she grew an abundance of vegetables, including tomatoes, in a glasshouse; I remember watching her nurturing them as they turned from green to ruby red in the heat of the sun. We visited her often so I always looked forward to seeing what was new in her 'secret' garden, and as a child, it was like going into another world—so I have good memories of that time.

"When the tomatoes ripened we would pick them, bring them into her house and make them into this intensely flavoured tomato sauce. The recipe is very simple, with a very distinctive smell as it simmered away on the Aga to make a thick sauce. Of course, pizzas were not the thing in those days, so my grandmother used to use it for covering meatballs or lamb cutlets before popping them into the oven. Today, I use the same recipe but put it on a sourdough pizza base... and I believe that this tomato sauce is the key to a good pizza!"

Emily Bunbury at The Forge
in Lisnavagh.



◆ Makes: Just under a kilo of sauce

Recipe tips

Put tomatoes into a large bowl and pierce a few times with a sharp knife. Pour over boiling water and leave to soak until you see the skins of the tomatoes beginning to flake (about 60-90 seconds) then place tomatoes into cold/iced water for a few minutes. Drain tomatoes; peel off the skins and discard them.

Prep: 20-25 mins / Cook: 1hr

Difficulty: Intermediate

Grate the garlic onto a board with skins on and discard any skin at the end. This method brings out the garlic's best flavour.

Rich Tomato Sauce

“This is an old recipe, passed down through my family and adapted over the years; though some methods have changed, it still honours the original and has the same basis. It’s great for homemade pizza but can be used in many ways.”

Ingredients

- 2 onions, peeled and finely diced
- 6 cloves garlic, grated (see tip opposite)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 8 ripe homegrown (if possible!) tomatoes, skins removed, peeled and chopped (see tip opposite)
- 1 glass of white wine
- 250ml water
- pinch of sugar
- salt and pepper
- handful of chopped fresh basil/oregano
- 50g tomato puree or chopped oven-dried / sun-dried tomatoes

Method

- 1 Gently sauté the onions in the olive oil for 10 minutes or until translucent.
- 2 Add the garlic, cook for 1 minute and then add the chopped tomatoes, wine, water, sugar and some salt and pepper. Cook over low heat until reduced in volume by two-thirds.
- 3 Stir in oven-dried or sun-dried tomatoes/tomato paste and fresh herbs and check for seasoning.
- 4 For a smoother finish, you can blend the sauce to use as a base layer on pizza; or leave it the way it is to enjoy with pasta or serve over meat dishes.

My grandmother spooned the sauce over meatballs, chops or cutlets before baking. I use the same recipe today and spread it on a sourdough pizza base. Keep refrigerated in an airtight container or jar for up to two weeks.

See pizza dough recipe on the next page.

To make your own pizza dough:

Method

- 1 Place 450ml of the lukewarm water (do not use hot water!) in a small bowl, sprinkle the yeast and a pinch of sugar on top, mix and let rest for 5-10 minutes, until the mixture is nice and bubbly.
- 2 In a separate small bowl mix the remaining 50ml of water with the sea salt and set it aside.
- 3 Pour the water and yeast mixture into a stand mixer, add the olive oil, and using the dough hook attachment, start mixing on a low speed, and slowly incorporate the sifted flour.
- 4 Once the flour has been added, continue to mix for about 5 minutes, adding the water and salt mixture towards the end, and then continue to mix until the dough is smooth and stops sticking to the sides of the bowl. If the dough is still too sticky sprinkle in a little more flour, if it's too dry add a little more water.
- 5 Transfer the dough onto a clean work surface sprinkled with flour and work it with your hands until smooth and even.
- 6 Transfer the dough to a lightly oiled large bowl and cover with plastic wrap or a damp kitchen towel. Place the bowl in a warm place (about 24-27°C) and rest the dough for about 2-3 hours, until it has doubled in size.
- 7 To check if the dough is ready, lightly dip your finger into the dough; if the indentation bounces back slowly, then the dough is ready.
- 8 Transfer the dough to a lightly floured surface. Divide the dough into 6-7oz (180-200gr) pieces with the help of a dough scraper or a sharp knife.
- 9 Work each dough piece with your hands until it forms a smooth and even ball, then transfer into a lightly oiled tray and cover with a slightly damp kitchen towel.
- 10 Allow the dough balls to rise for an additional 3 hours;
- 11 Then they are ready to roll or stretch into shape.
- 12 Once shaped, place each pizza on a floured baking sheet, top as desired with sauce, cheese etc. then bake in a preheated hot oven (240-250°C / 220-230°C fan) for 8-10 minutes or until crisp (as all home ovens vary, you may need to tweak the temperature/time to suit).



Ingredients

- 500ml lukewarm water
- 7g dry active yeast, 1 pinch sugar
- 3 tsp fine sea salt
- 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 900g strong flour or 00 flour, sifted

