

thought

they'd entertain their friends and family as though they hadn't left home."

Tony's culinary career took him to the U.S., Australia, Fiji and the Cook Islands before he set up his business Food For Thought in Auckland.

But he says it's the five-year apprenticeship at Wellington's George Hotel, which his mother Fay insisted on, that really taught him about food.

"I learned all the basics and then I fell in love with color and its presentation in food."

That concern for presentation has paid dividends in catering for an increasing number of Japanese clients, including the head of the giant Sony Corporation.

"I really go out of my way to use Kiwi ingredients and that appealed to Sony boss Mr Olga," Tony says.

"I let my creative juices flow — blanched crayfish tail cut into medallions and placed inside sliced smoked salmon wrapped in spinach. That green effect was offset by oysters, scallops, paua and tuatua, and I made a pink coral sauce from crayfish stock."

The Sony head was so impressed with the meal, which included a loin of venison and a passionfruit bavarois with kiwi fruit, melon and blackberries, Mr Olga described it in detail to his second-in-command — and when he came to Auckland, Tony was asked to recreate it.

For Tony that's the kind of job that makes catering worthwhile: "The executive jobs pay quite well, but they don't fulfill me. I enjoy getting into my whites and creating, bringing in the colors and the presentation.

"I'm sure that's what clicked with the Japanese."

Tony's next guests at the hide-away are expected to be Sean Connery and Kevin Costner.

Although his work has him creating all these exotic dishes, Tony often eats out, enjoying his favorite dish: oxtail casserole with mashed potatoes and peas.

*Story: Nikki Wilson
Pictures: Clare Allison
and Scope*

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