Chicken with Steph's spice

1 tsp whole allspice berries (aka pimento)
2 bay leaves, roughly torn
1½ tsp hot chilli powder
1½ tsp paprika
½ tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp mixed spice (the sweet one, like pumpkin spice)
25g light soft brown sugar
1½ tbsp runny honey
1–2 green jalapeño chillies, finely chopped
1–2 red Scotch bonnet (habanero) chillies, finely chopped
1 small red onion, cut into 1cm dice (100g)
2 spring onions, finely chopped (30g)
50ml olive oil
1kg chicken thighs, bone in, skin on
2 tbsp white wine vinegar
salt

Steph was a Jamaican chef Helen worked with many years ago in Melbourne. A lot of time has passed since the recipe for Steph's roasted jerk-spiced meats was handed on – passed around the kitchen, scribbled down on a scrap of paper – but it's been with Helen ever since. Recipes, like postcards, flying around the world with the scent of a place on one side, scribbled greetings on the other.

We served the chicken with a simple slaw made with half a small cabbage and a quarter of a pineapple, both thinly sliced, some freshly flaked coconut, sliced jalapeño, spring onion, coriander and mint. It's dressed with olive oil, lime juice and maple syrup.

Serves 4, with rice and salad

Put the allspice and bay leaves into a dry pan and toast them for 1–2 minutes, until the bay leaves have blistered. Using a pestle and mortar, crush to a powder, then tip into a large bowl along with all the remaining ingredients apart from the chicken and vinegar. Add 1 teaspoon of salt, mix well to combine, then add the chicken. Massage well, so that all the thighs are coated, then keep in the fridge, covered, for at least 6 hours (or overnight).

Half an hour before you are going to cook the chicken, take it out of the fridge, add the vinegar and toss to combine.

Preheat the oven to 180°C fan.

Spread the chicken out on a large parchment-lined baking tray, skin side up. Bake for about 45 minutes, rotating the tray halfway through, until crisp and golden brown. Remove from the oven and allow to rest for 10 minutes before serving.

