

Lord Howe's dramatic coastline makes it an island destination like no other.

LORD HOWE

An island filled with history and locals living a life breezier than the palm trees around them is what this New South Wales territory is all about. Add pristine beaches and upscale lodges with ocean views, and you have a unique kind of barefoot luxury, writes *delicious.* editor-in-chief **Kerrie McCallum.**

PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS COURT

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ISLAND ESCAPE.

Lord Howe Island is the place where time stands still. There is one small airstrip, where locals await to greet arrivals via the one flight per day from the mainland. There is no mobile phone coverage (except at the upmarket Capella Lodge). Payphones exist (although I've forgotten how to use them). There are no traffic lights, streetlights, very few cars, a speed limit of 25 kilometres per hour, no one wears seatbelts, you have to remember to wave as you pass people, and only 350 residents (many eighth-generation islanders). A ship, the Island Trader, arrives every two weeks to restock locals and resorts with food, goods and any Net-a-Porter parcels that may have been ordered from the mainland. Locals share seafood, beef, milk and produce to

get by. There is a small hospital, a school where shoes are optional, three churches, and one cop on the island (who wisely left for the weekend when the *delicious.* crew rolled into town).

The sub-tropical scenery is jaw-dropping. The island, older than Hawaii, was World Heritage-listed in 1982, and is surrounded by a marine park. Hence, the sustainable operators take conservation seriously. Standouts include unique vegetation, secret lagoons, good surf, and desert beaches bordered by a coral reef where turtles and fish swim with you. There are no poisonous snakes or spiders. Two dramatic mountains, the remnants of a volcanic eruption seven million years ago, loom over the island, providing sought-after hiking tracks. About 10 kilometres in length, the island's untouched beauty remains so because a maximum of 400 tourists are allowed on the island at any one time. It's also part of New South Wales, so there are no customs to clear.

Stress levels dissipate instantly. You can't check emails or Facebook from the moment you land, so you don't think about it. There is no choice but to unwind on island time, sans that pressure to visit a hot restaurant you've read about, or check out a certain bar. There are no shops (other than Joy's Grocer) to prowl.



FROM LEFT: the outdoors blend seamlessly to the revamped living spaces at Capella Lodge; which also feature sleek kitchens (inset); expansive windows let nature in; soak in the tropical vibes from your very own hot tub. OPPOSITE: the Lodge sits at the foot of Mount Lidgbird and Gower.

It's enforced relaxation that, although from another era, couldn't be more appropriate for a holiday in 2019.

WHERE TO STAY

The high/low offerings mean there's something for everyone. **Capella Lodge** is the jewel in the island's crown. Founded by James and Hayley Baillie of Baillie Lodges (owners of Southern Ocean Lodge and Uluru's Longitude 131°) in 2003, it recently underwent a \$4 million refurbishment. A second storey was added to several rooms for space and better views, and the restaurant and welcome area updated. The Baillies have a long history with the island. Hayley's father, the adventurer and entrepreneur Dick Smith, made his first expedition to climb nearby Ball's Pyramid in 1964. The family spent summers here before buying the property that was to become Capella.

Mark McKillop and Libby Grant have managed Capella for 15 years, and their dry humour and warm hospitality is a winning combination. It's a four-kilometre drive into 'town', or 10 minutes on a bike,

which is the most popular way to get around. There are only nine rooms at Capella, which start at \$800 per person per night, and rates are all inclusive, so the couple get to know their guests well. It feels like staying at a family beach house, albeit a luxurious one; the service is personal and involved. A naturalist holds a talk every Sunday in the Kentia lounge, and there are plenty of activities, but "the essence of Lord Howe is to do a little bit of nothing," laughs Grant. She tells me there are no room keys: guests never lock their rooms because there is nobody around to take anything.

The dining here is the best on the island, and the view from the restaurant, bar and deck, under the shadow of Mount Gower and Lidgbird, is world famous. On Sunday nights, head chef Cooper Dickson prepares a degustation, and there is plenty of local fish on the menu. "The kingfish is excellent, and arrives every second day," he says. "But the World Heritage listing means there are no other commercial industries." Crays are abundant but limited to two per person,



per catch. "However if guests catch something, we'll cook it up," he says. There's also local beef, a nursery, edible flowers and herbs, and a lot of coastal foraging to be done, but not when we visit as rainfall has been at its lowest ever. Dickson has seen a lot more local produce become available in the four years he has been on the island, and lists all his suppliers and local producers inside his

ISLAND ESCAPE.

menu, and those that supply from the mainland (including *delicious.*' own butcher, Victor Churchill).

Arajilla Retreat is the other high-end offering on Lord Howe, but with a slightly different focus on eco-tourism, wellness and a feeling of laid-back living. Rates start at \$764 per person and are inclusive of all meals, and it also operates the private house Blue Peter. Its secluded setting in the forest, at the opposite end of the island, makes its proximity to Old Settlement Beach (famous for the turtles that swim close to shore) and Ned's Beach (where *The Shallows* was filmed) a must for outdoor dining, which is something Arajilla excels at. Head chef Ben Crompton also does degustations in-house and changes his menu daily based on the local produce. But the highlights for me are how he creates unlikely and elegant outdoor dining

scenarios, such as breakfast barbecues and barefoot sunset canapes on the beach using wood-fired barbecues, and linen tablecloths thrown over the distressed picnic tables. You can wander down onto the beach and swim with turtles as the alfresco spread is set up, or have breakfast conveniently unrolled after a bracing hike up nearby Malabar.

Serviced apartments like **Leanda Lei** are an easy option for families, from \$310 per night twin share, and are centrally located, making it easy to get around.

EATING OUT

While the seven-course degustation at **Capella Lodge** is top notch, or canapes on the lagoon by **Arajilla** pretty special, there are casual spots for a feed, such as the

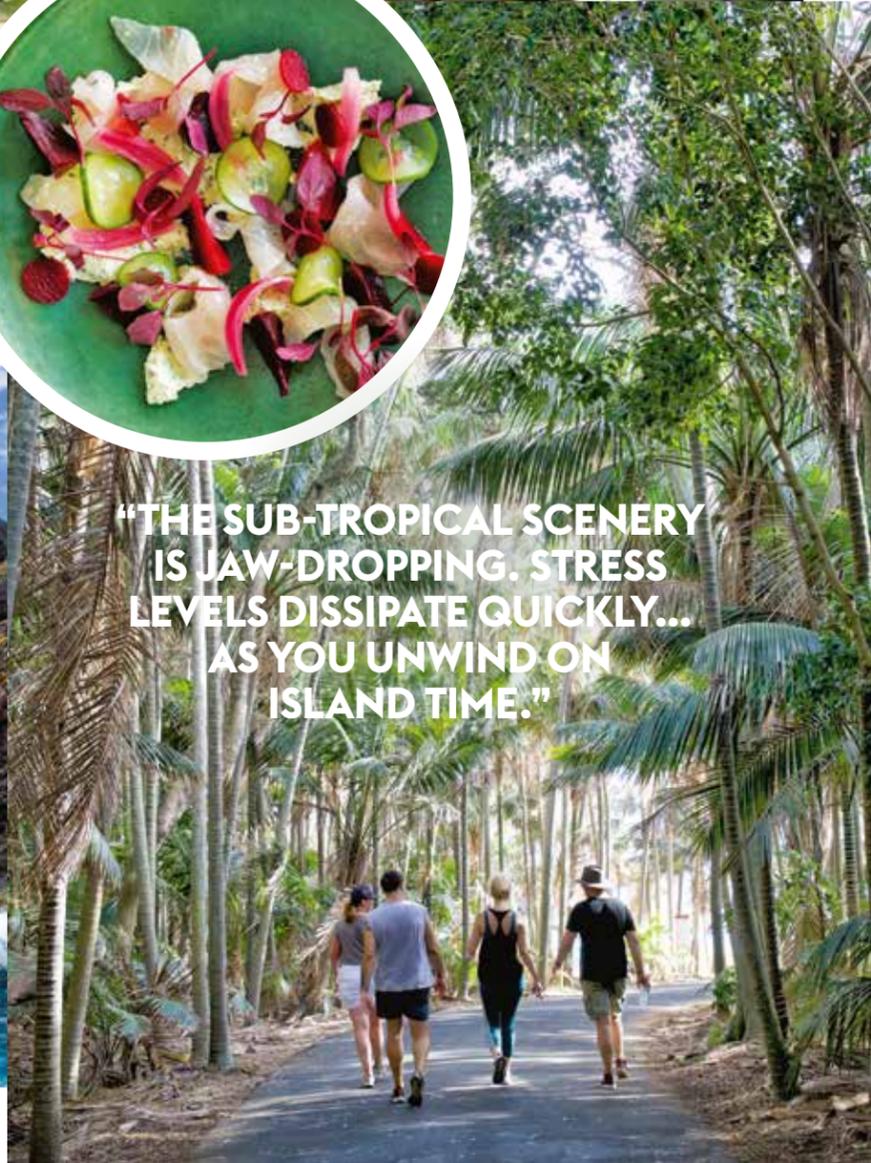
Bowling Club, or the **Lord Howe Island Golf Club**, which has nine holes but is also a hub

for locals, with an elevated view across the island. It cranks out a solid menu and on a busy Friday night, we're told to watch the sun set to see the 'green flash'. Local lore has it that if you look hard enough as the sun hits the water, a sliver of green cuts across the island, although many locals seem divided as to whether it's real or not (the 'green flash' may indeed refer to a herbal-induced vision!). Most of the locals wear multiple hats, like Golf Club president Anthony Riddle, who also doubles as the island's meat inspector, plus turtle tour operator and school council member. (His mum, Judy, who we meet on the plane over, runs Leanda Lei Apartments.)

The old-fashioned barbecues around the island are a must, and the world-class views are free. "There is nowhere else in NSW you can have a wood-fired barbecue out in the open," explains Riddle. "The council supplies the wood, and you can order a barbecue pack from **Top Shop**. Kylie Mullins will drop it off to your chosen spot." There's no worry about anyone pinching your stuff. The island operates on an 'honesty system', so you just turn



CLOCKWISE: Capella Lodge head chef Cooper Dickson; kingfish is served (inset); the Lodge's restaurant boasts killer views; the *delicious.* crew walk through palm-tree-lined paths; rock formations tower over the waves; OPPOSITE: this way to paradise – Lord Howe's stunning landscape.



"THE SUB-TROPICAL SCENERY IS JAW-DROPPING. STRESS LEVELS DISSIPATE QUICKLY... AS YOU UNWIND ON ISLAND TIME."

ISLAND ESCAPE.

LIGHTS, CAMERAS, ACTION!

With the world's most southerly coral reef, a wealth of dive sites, bird and animal watching, fish feeding, surfing, hiking and turtle tours, Lord Howe is an adventure-lover's dream. Fifth-generation islander Jack Shick runs **Sea to Summit Expeditions** (as well as keeping bees for over 40 years to supply the island with Jack's Honey) and runs hikes up Mt Gower (he has gone on 2060 walks, many in bare feet!). He also mans fishing charters from \$180 per person (lordhoweislandtours.net). The sea hardy Shick makes daily deliveries to lodges like Capella, and you'll often find his catch of the day on the menu.

Dave Gardner from **Reef N Beyond** does the 79-kilometre journey out to the eerie Ball's Pyramid, via key landmarks. Dave packs lunch, his wife's homemade carrot cake and a sneaky glass of wine or two for the trip.

Anthony Riddle's **Marine Adventures** has a glass-bottom boat perfect for

spotting turtles, or snorkelling off the reef and nearby shipwreck. "Since we stopped seaplanes landing here, we've seen a 300 per cent increase in coral regeneration," he says. He points out holes in the coral reef where turtles have burrowed. "You'll see a lot of them here in summer because they like warm water," he explains. The warm ocean currents are one of the reasons the coral is resilient – the unique location and mix of current temperatures mean global warming will affect it less.

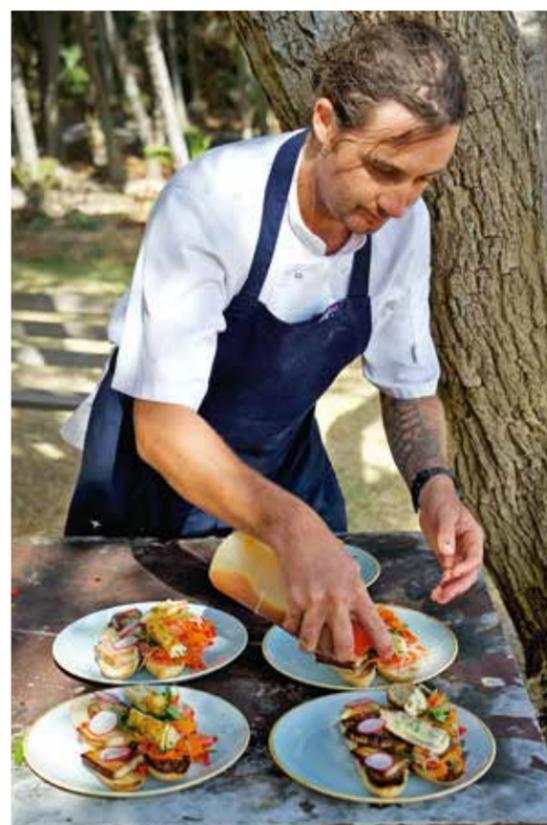
Finally, for a few coins, you can feed the fish at Ned's Beach – a gumball machine dispenses little pellets of feed. Waded in up to your knees and wait for the kingfish and silver drummers to come. And remember: hikes or jetty jumps are free and a Lord Howe tradition. Getting around is easy; you can rent bikes from **Wilson's Hire** as well as a badass Mitsubishi Outlander requiring the odd jumpstart that the *delicious*. crew commandeered. ✂

GETTING THERE

Qantas Link flies direct to Lord Howe Island from Sydney daily, and Brisbane weekly. There are also seasonal flights from Port Macquarie. While the trip is quick (two hours from Sydney), the wind can sometimes make landing unpredictable and the flights can be expensive, costing an average of \$1200 return, so stay the week to make the most of your trip. For accommodation information, see lordhoweisland.info or visitnsw.com

d. delicious.com.au/travel
For more inspiring destinations around Australia.

FROM TOP: snorkelling with Maritime Adventures; chef Colin Fassnidge catches a big one with Jack Shick; breathtaking views while hiking up Malabar Hill.



CLOCKWISE: produce from Kentia Fresh's nursery; sweet potato from Thornleigh Farm; Jack Shick's bees produce honey supplied to the island; Arajilla's Ben Crompton prepares brunch for the delicious. team.



up when you're ready to cook and you'll find all your gear to go. The top lodges will also put together fully stocked packs for you.

PRODUCE

The rich volcanic soil means growing great produce chemical free is possible, and there are two operators forging the way.

Kentia Fresh is a nursery run by Mike and Ellen, with help from Izak (former chef at Arajilla), who harness the vegetation and fresh produce. Cucumbers drip from vines, alongside passionfruit, tomatoes, avocados, chillies, snake beans, and rows of lettuces and herbs like mustard wasabi. "We've picked 500 kilos of tomatoes in the last few months and can harvest for 10 months," explains Izak. A brewery is in the works, and Izak hopes to have an onsite cafe using Kentia produce.

Thornleigh Farm is a permaculture operation that produces limited but high-quality food. It was founded in 1890 and has been painstakingly restored by young caretakers Brenden and Kirra Kong, who dealt with challenges, like trees

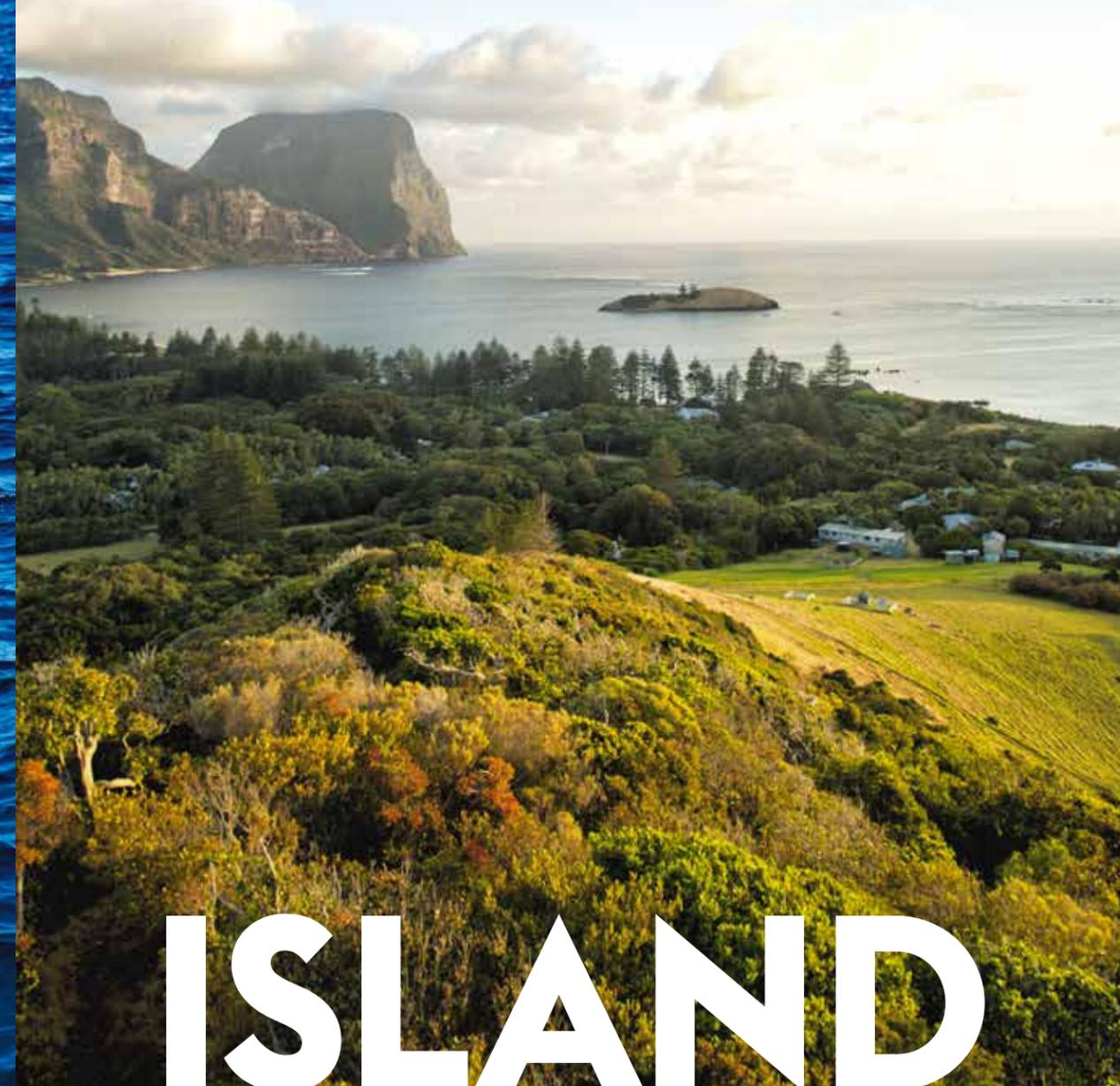
growing out of the living room! Now they operate a store and farm tours on site. Along with fruit and veg, and extras like pomelo jam, they keep bees and supply their lovely plummy honey to locals and resorts while also restoring the island's original butchery and cool room to its former glory. "Our ultimate goal is to stop importing food for local residents because it costs a lot to dispose of packaging," explains Brenden. "With more water and time, and more locals growing, we can get that constant supply."

Commercial beef production was recently resurrected. Anthony Riddle underwent training on the mainland to become the local meat inspector to keep local business alive. "The beef has this lovely taste – the cattle graze on grass just off the ocean so there's this clean, green, saltiness, almost like wagyu." He takes us to visit Gardner, a 90-year-old eighth-generation resident milking the jersey cows for milk to supply locals. While he gets about 80 litres per day, the creamy milk can't be sold, so it's exchanged for other goods with nearby families.

TREASURE

When there are barbecue hotspots dotted around a tropical locale, there's only one thing to do: rally four top chefs and let them play with fire. **Manu Feildel, Colin Fassnidge, Anthony Puharich** and **Monty Koludrovic** put Lord Howe Island's hidden gems to work with their easy, throw-together barbecue recipes perfect for an afternoon in the sun.

PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS COURT STYLING KIRSTEN JENKINS



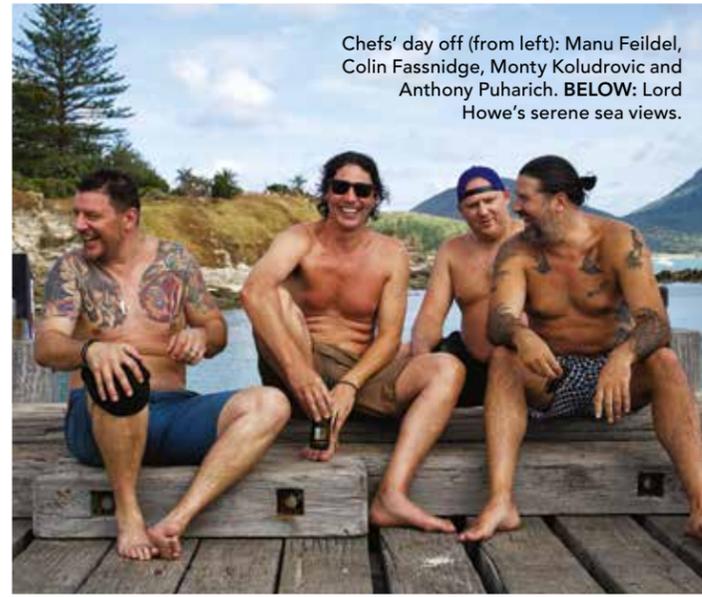
ISLAND

MERCHANDISING EMMALY STEWART



DELICIOUS. ON TOUR.

Beef skewers with cucumber & shallot yoghurt (recipe p 103).
OPPOSITE: Lord Howe Island's magnificent views are the perfect backdrop for good food and good company.



Chefs' day off (from left): Manu Feildel, Colin Fassnidge, Monty Koludrovic and Anthony Puharich. **BELOW:** Lord Howe's serene sea views.

WHEN THIS MOTLEY crew descended on the tranquil shores of Lord Howe Island, most of them had little idea of what to expect. Manu Feildel, Colin Fassnidge, Monty Koludrovic and Anthony Puharich spent a few days exploring this tiny place in the Tasman Sea. "It's one of the rare island experiences where you can just sit back and let nature take the limelight," said Fassnidge.

Koludrovic is a regular visitor to the island, returning more than once: "There's so much to fall in love with. The lack of development, the amazing welcome from the locals," he explains.

Joking that he's the unofficial Lord Howe mayoral candidate, front of mind for Puharich was the back-in-time vibe: "How much the people on the island celebrate the small things, whether that's bee production or the pristine waters, is just really cool." These recipes were inspired by their escape.

@manufeildelofficial
 @cfassnidge
 @askthebutcher_
 @monty_koludrovic

"I MET THE FARMER OF PASTURE-RAISED BEEF ON THE ISLAND. THERE'S JUST THIS ENDEARING PASSION FOR THEIR PRISTINE PRODUCE."
 - ANTHONY PUHARICH



Barbecued rib eye cutlets with nori butter.

ANTHONY PUHARICH'S BARBECUED CORN WITH HONEY & HERB BUTTER

SERVES 6, AS A SIDE

You will need kitchen string for this recipe.

- 2 tbs runny honey
- 2 tbs light soy sauce
- 1 tsp dashi powder
- 2 tbs each finely chopped coriander and flat-leaf parsley
- 150g unsalted butter, softened
- 6 corn cobs, in the husk

To make the honey and herb butter, combine, honey, soy, dashi, herbs and butter in a bowl. Season, stir to combine.

To prepare the corn, peel back husks and remove silks. Leave the husk intact at the base and tie back with kitchen string.

Preheat a lightly greased chargrill or barbecue to high. Grill corn, turning and brushing with butter regularly, for 12-15 minutes, or until charred and cooked. Transfer corn to a large platter, season to taste and serve with remaining butter.

BARBECUED RIB EYE CUTLETS WITH NORI BUTTER

SERVES 4-6

Store any leftover nori butter in a freezer-safe container for up to 3 months.

- 4 x 300g rib eye cutlets, trimmed
- Extra virgin olive oil, to drizzle
- 250g unsalted butter, chopped into 1cm pieces, at room temperature
- 2 sheets seasoned nori, shredded
- 2cm piece (10g) ginger, finely grated
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- Finely grated zest of 1 lemon
- 1/2 bunch flat-leaf parsley, leaves picked, finely chopped

Place cutlets on a tray and drizzle with olive oil. Season and coat all over. Cover with plastic wrap and stand at room temperature until ready to cook.

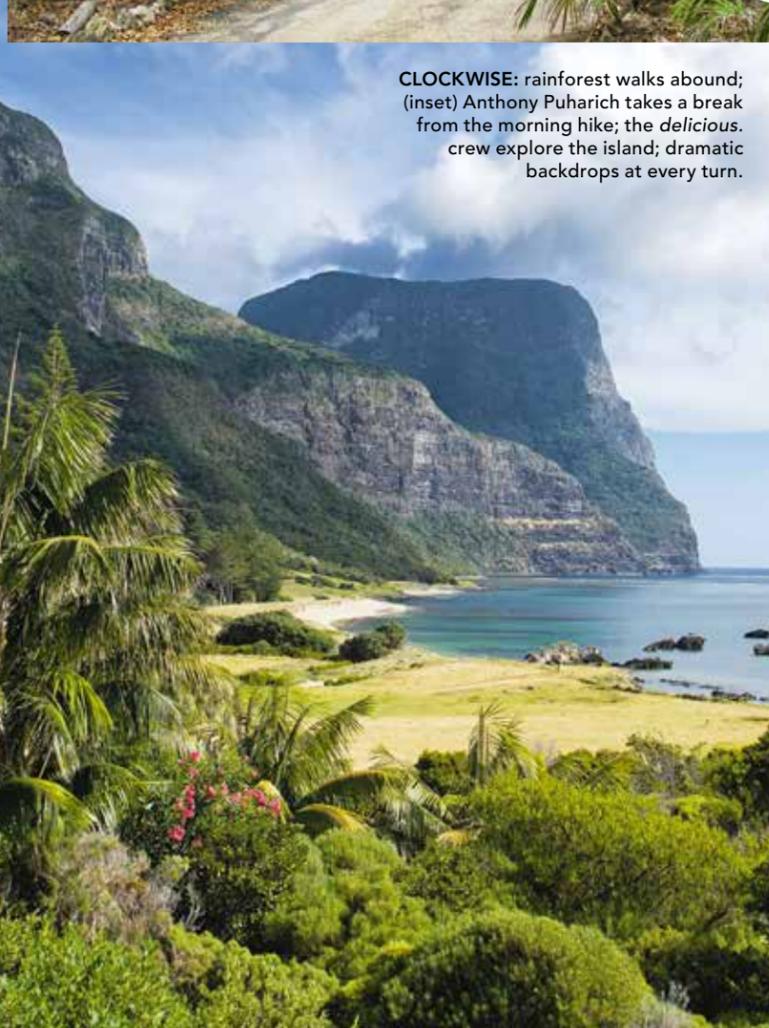


DELICIOUS. ON TOUR.

Spectacular landscapes on the island.



Barbecued corn with honey & herb butter



CLOCKWISE: rainforest walks abound; (inset) Anthony Puharich takes a break from the morning hike; the delicious crew explore the island; dramatic backdrops at every turn.



Salad piemontaise – French-style potato salad

“THE BEAUTY OF THE ISLAND IS IT’S A WELL-KEPT SECRET – IT’S GOOD FOR YOUR SPIRIT.”

– COLIN FASSNIDGE

MANU FEILDEL’S
SALADE PIEMONTAISE – FRENCH-STYLE POTATO SALAD
SERVES 4-6, AS A SIDE

- 1kg kipfler potatoes, scrubbed
- 4 eggs
- 400g mixed baby heirloom tomatoes, halved
- 200g sliced ham, torn
- 6 cornichons, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup loosely packed flat-leaf parsley leaves, plus extra to serve
- Baby red vein sorrel leaves, to serve

MAYONNAISE

- 2 egg yolks, at room temperature
- 1 1/2 tbs Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp lemon juice
- 3/4 cup (180ml) grapeseed oil

For the mayonnaise, place the egg yolks, mustard and lemon juice in a food processor and whiz to combine. With the motor running, gradually add the oil until combined. Add a little warm water, 1 tsp at a time, if mayonnaise is too thick. Season to taste and set aside until ready to use.

Place the potatoes in a large saucepan of lightly salted water, bring to the boil over a high heat, then reduce heat to medium and simmer for 20-25 minutes or until potatoes are tender but still firm and not falling apart. Drain. When cool enough to handle, slice into 1cm-thick rounds.

Meanwhile, place the eggs in a small saucepan, cover with cold water and bring to the boil over a medium heat. Cook for 6 minutes from the boil for soft-boiled, or adjust time to cook to your liking. Drain and refresh in cold water, then carefully peel the eggs and cut into halves. Set aside.

Place the potato, egg, tomato, ham and cornichon in a large bowl, and gently toss to combine. Add parsley and enough mayonnaise to just coat the salad ingredients. Season to taste and toss gently to combine. Scatter with extra parsley and baby sorrel leaves. Serve immediately.

DELICIOUS. ON TOUR.

COLIN FASSNIDGE’S
BEEF SKEWERS WITH CUCUMBER & SHALLOT YOGHURT
MAKES 6 SKEWERS

Begin this recipe 1 day ahead. You will need 6 x 30cm metal or bamboo skewers.

- 2kg flank steaks (substitute any good cut of beef suitable to barbecue), trimmed, cut into 5cm pieces
- 1 tbs smoked paprika
- 1 tbs each toasted coriander seeds and toasted cumin seeds, crushed
- 1 tbs brown sugar
- 5 garlic cloves, crushed
- Zest and juice of 2 limes, plus extra wedges to serve
- 3/4 cup (180ml) extra virgin olive oil
- Baby coriander, to serve

CUCUMBER & SHALLOT YOGHURT

- 1 Lebanese cucumber, seeds removed, finely chopped
- 2 long green shallots, thinly sliced
- 1/4 bunch dill, finely chopped, plus extra sprigs to serve
- 1 cup (280g) Greek yoghurt

Thread the steak pieces evenly onto the skewers and place in a large deep rectangular tray. To make the marinade, place the remaining ingredients, except baby coriander, in a bowl, season to taste and whisk to combine. Pour marinade over skewers, season to taste and turn to coat all over. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

Meanwhile, for the cucumber and shallot yoghurt, place all ingredients in a bowl, season to taste and stir to combine. Set aside until ready to use.

Preheat a lightly greased chargrill or barbecue to high. In batches, grill skewers, turning frequently, for 5-6 minutes or until charred and cooked to your liking. Rest for 5 minutes before serving. Place skewers on a large platter and scatter with baby coriander. Place cucumber and shallot yoghurt in a small bowl and serve with beef skewers.



DELICIOUS. ON TOUR.

**MONTY KOLUDROVIC'S
MISO HONEY PORK NECK**
SERVES 4

Begin this recipe 1 day ahead. You will need kitchen string.

- 2kg piece pork neck, trimmed
- 1/4 cup (90g) runny honey
- 1/4 cup (80g) white miso paste
- 2 tbs chopped rosemary leaves, plus extra to serve
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon

To prepare the pork neck, cut 8 pieces of kitchen string, long enough to tie the pork. Lay the string at even intervals on a bench and place the pork on top of the string. Bring up each piece of string and tie a knot to secure the pork firmly.

To make the marinade, place all the remaining ingredients in a small saucepan with 1/4 cup (60ml) water over medium heat. Bring to a simmer and whisk to combine. Season to taste, then remove from heat and cool. Place pork in a large bowl and pour over marinade, making sure

the pork is coated all over.

Place in the fridge to marinate, turning occasionally, overnight.

Preheat barbecue oven with lid down to 240°C.

Remove pork from fridge and leave to stand until it reaches room temperature.

Transfer pork to a large

roasting pan on a wire rack with 2cm water over the base of pan. Reserve marinade in a small bowl. Brush pork with marinade and place in the centre of barbecue oven. Close the lid and roast, basting frequently, for 1 hours 30 minutes-2 hours or until pork is caramelised and cooked through. Add more water to roasting pan if needed. Remove from oven and rest for 15 minutes. Carve pork and place onto a large platter to serve. Scatter with extra rosemary.

CABBAGE AND PEA SLAW
SERVES 4, AS A SIDE

- 4 eschalots, thinly sliced (we used a mandoline)
- 1 cup (160g) fresh peas
- 1/4 green cabbage, trimmed, thinly sliced
- 1/4 green papaya, peeled, shredded
- 1 cup loosely packed mint and coriander leaves

DRESSING

- 1/3 cup (80ml) lime juice
- 2 tbs mirin
- Zest of 2 limes
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 tsp caster sugar
- 2 tsp sesame oil
- 1/3 cup (80ml) mustard oil

For the dressing, place ingredients in a jar, season then shake to combine. Set aside, and shake again when ready to serve.

To make the slaw, place all ingredients in a large bowl and toss to combine. When ready to serve, add half of the dressing, season then toss to combine. Transfer slaw to a large serving platter and drizzle with remaining dressing. Season then serve. ✂

**“THE ISLAND HAS
A HISTORY OF SELF-
SUFFICIENCY AND
RIGHT NOW IT IS
TRULY GREAT.”**

– MONTY KOLUDROVIC

Cabbage and pea slaw



Miso honey pork neck

d delicious.com.au/recipes
For more sizzling-hot
barbecue recipes.



CLOCKWISE:
island adventures
on two wheels;
(inset) checking
out the island's
cray; dockside
on a sunny day.

