

SPECIAL WINTER FOOD ISSUE

MINDFOOD

Smart Thinking

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*"People who love
to eat are always
the best people."*

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CHAPTER FIVE

HOME & TRAVEL

MINDFOOD's guide to everything from interior design to travel and global destinations.

SNAP TO IT

From Chinese dumplings to Mexican tortillas, food persuades many of us to pack our bags and see the world. If you're looking for even more motivation, let the finalists' snaps from the annual Pink Lady Food Photographer of the Year competition be your inspiration.

Recently held in London, the competition awards excellence in amateur and professional photography, and sees hundreds of photographers from around the world capture images of their favourite food moments. Among the top shots for 2014 were a tasty close-up of a spanner crab by Australian Louise Lister, American artist Nicole Branan's *Barbecue Ribs* and this year's winner *Noodle Making* (pictured), taken by Tessa Bunney on her travels through Vietnam and part of a larger series that explores the craft villages around Hanoi.

As tasty as they are, the awards also have a heart, giving support to Action Against Hunger, a humanitarian aid organisation specialising in saving the lives of malnourished children in the world's poorest countries.



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Go online to see more shots from the finalists of the Pink Lady Food Photographer of the Year competition.

KEYWORDS: FOOD, PHOTOGRAPHY

WORDS: NATASHA DRAGUN. PHOTOGRAPHY: TESSA BUNNEY.

HOMEMADE

Forget private dining rooms – the latest trend sweeping Asia takes travellers into locals' homes.

A new website, PlateCulture, (plateculture.com) brings together more than 80 home “restaurants” across four countries on the continent, where families dish up everything from Indian banquets to Japanese *kaiseki*.

Not only can you try authentic fare, but you'll mix with locals in an intimate setting. The best bit? The site plans to expand its options to the Antipodes in the near future.



YES, CHEF!

If you're a fan of the TV show, then you won't want to miss MasterChef Travel (masterchef-travel.com.au), a freshly minted selection of culinary holidays taking you from Italy to India and many places in between. In collaboration with Cox & Kings, tours are led by popular contestants from the Australian version of the reality show, with local food experts on call wherever you land and a wide range of experiences on offer – cellar door visits, cooking classes, home-cooked meals – to give an unprecedented taste of the destination.

Kate Bracks, winner of *MasterChef Australia* in 2011, will accompany the inaugural tour to Italy in September, with trips to England, India, Mexico and Vietnam billed before the end of the year.



AIRPORTS GO UPSCALE

Overpriced and overrated airport food is becoming a thing of the past, with a number of restaurants and bars making time spent in transit increasingly tasty. At Heathrow Airport's Terminal 2, Heston Blumenthal (above) recently opened The Perfectionists' Café, focusing on wood-fired fare and nostalgic British flavours. Also at Heathrow, Gorgeous Kitchen's menu revolves around local British produce.

At Germany's Munich Airport, travellers can indulge in a stein or two at Airbräu, a brewery and Bavarian restaurant. Meanwhile, the branch of Michelin-starred Hung's Delicacies at Hong Kong International Airport dishes up the same *lou seoi*-style braised meat that has made its sister restaurants so popular; also with a Michelin star, Top Air at Stuttgart Airport offers those with time a seven-course degustation. And coming soon to Toronto Pearson International Airport is Asian Kitchen, a fine-dining fusion restaurant by Susur Lee.

BURN NOTICE
These scented candles are good enough to eat.



MAX BENJAMIN LEMONGRASS & GINGER

The uplifting scent of this candle brings together heady aromas from Asia. Other fragrances include Moroccan mint. maxbenjamin.ie



WICK & TALLOW BERGAMOT & BASIL

This candle combines crisp citrus scents with basil and green floral notes and a luxurious woody base. wickandtallow.com



EUROPEAN APOTHECARY SEA SALT CANDLE

The fresh, sea salty fragrance of this candle will have you sitting on the beach (or eating fish and chips) in no time. shopsaison.com.au



SLICE OF HEAVEN
The island resort of Laucala combines lavish amenities and villas with farms, orchards and gardens that support more than 80 per cent of the island's food needs.

bars stocked with champagne and replenished with fresh fruit juice and chilled herbal tea daily.

The island has a history almost as interesting as the villas. Sold to European settlers in the late 1800s, Laucala was transformed from an unruly tangle of jungle into a sprawling copra plantation. Publishing magnate Malcolm Forbes bought the land in 1972, upgrading accommodation to promote tourism and adding goat and cattle farms. Forbes died in 1990 and is buried on the island.

More than a decade later, co-founder of Red Bull energy drink and billionaire Dietrich Mateschitz swooped in; it took him and his team three years to conceptualise the current resort and another two to build it, with attention given to keeping as much of the 1400 hectares as close to their natural state as possible (rumour has it that Mateschitz forbids staff from cutting down trees on the island).

The property finally opened in 2008, with trimmings so lavish that during my stay I find it hard to pick my jaw up off the ground; the 18-hole David McLay Kidd-designed golf course is maintained to PGA standards – not an easy feat on a tropical island. There are some 10 different types of boats available, including a classic yacht and a game fishing vessel; you can snorkel, dive and horse-ride; and there are trails for mountain biking and hiking.

It's extravagant, yet remarkably understated; it's the epitome of luxury, yet bare feet and a sarong seem to be the standard dress code. Indeed, many guests check in and never leave their villas. And while staying put has a certain appeal, it would be a shame not to explore the island's hinterland.

It's here that I find farms, orchards and gardens so elaborate they're able to support more than 80 per cent of the island's food needs, in keeping with the resort's "locavore" philosophy: celebrating local produce. Everything from the smoked salmon and cured meats to the jams and pickles are island-sourced and produced – even the drinking water, filtered through volcanic rock, comes from subterranean wells. Mateschitz's locavore vision saw huge farms built on the east coast of the island, now home to different breeds of cattle (including wagyu), goats, plump pigs and wild chickens (known as *jungle murghi*). Every day, fishermen pull up to the pier and the executive chef picks out crayfish, tuna and whatever else takes his fancy; when the tide is out, staff wander through mangroves looking for clams.

Hydroponic houses are lined with lettuce, tomatoes and green beans; to get to them I pass orchards of limes, breadfruit, soursop and coffee. The herb garden is an explosion of colour, with neat rows of vanilla, chilli and basil. There's a separate flower garden – housing some of the 3500 orchids found on the island – and a spa garden, where hibiscus, pandanas and lemongrass are grown and then later combined with virgin coconut oil to make the all-natural toiletries used in the spa and villas. My treatment, overlooking the sea, incorporates cool slices of island-grown cucumber, white sesame, turmeric, yoghurt and honey (there's also an apiary on the farm).

For all the man-made extravagance, it's this uncomplicated vision of sustainability and the simple life that sets Laucala apart; Mateschitz's South Pacific paradise is truly that.



ISLAND IDEALS

A small Fijian island is raising the bar not just when it comes to luxury but sustainability, too.

There's no denying the absolute luxury of Laucala, a private island resort in the Lau archipelago that lies north-east of the Fijian capital, Suva. With more than 350 staff, the resort boasts the highest guest-to-staff ratio in the world – the maximum number of people in a villa at any given time is just 80. This guarantees, of course, some of the most attentive, personalised resort service you'll come across.

Villas are strung along the north coast and might be set on a private, palm-studded beach, perched on a sheer cliff or stilted over the sea. London designer Lynne Hunt was called in to fit out the thatch-roof accommodations, which incorporate Fijian wood and stone throughout.

All come with ginger- and heliconia-ringed pools and rooms inspired by the surrounds: customised chandeliers resemble jellyfish or sea spray; a standing lamp looks like a clump of seagrass; and sofas and tables curve into the room, mimicking the ice-blue South Pacific waters mottled by corals just metres away. There are wooden soaking tubs, beachside yoga pavilions, and full



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Go online to read our review of Fiji Airways' new flight from Sydney to Suva. **KEYWORDS:** FIJI, AIRWAYS



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1. Damien Hirst's *Cock and Bull* dominates The Tramshed. 2. Vancouver's pared-back Heirloom. 3. Host, Copenhagen. 4. Miss Ko in Paris serves up delicious Asian fare. 5. Pump Room, Chicago. 6. The Jane in Antwerp occupies the former chapel of a military hospital.



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VISUAL FEASTS

Restaurant design continues to dazzle around the world. These eye-catching establishments are definitely worth the detour.

TRAMSHED, LONDON

Occupying a lofty industrial space, once the power station for Shoreditch's tram system, this restaurant pretty much sums up its menu in its artwork – a larger-than-life, suspended Damien Hirst sculpture, entitled *Cock and Bull*, of a Hereford cow and cockerel preserved in a steel and glass tank of formaldehyde greets diners on entry. While there are seasonal starters, the mains all revolve around – you guessed it – chicken and steak.

HEIRLOOM, VANCOUVER

Located in Vancouver's South Granville district, this slick vegetarian eatery has a pared-back design – think whitewashed walls, blonde wood tables and polished subway-style tiles, brought to life with antique wall cabinets, custom art and emerald Vitra Hal stools. Organic and fair-trade produce is turned into dishes such as avocado fritters and smoked chickpea-tempeh sausages.

HOST, COPENHAGEN

Denmark's design scene is legendary for good reason and Host, in the country's capital, doesn't disappoint. Raw, unfinished textures and materials include recycled timber and custom-made tableware, designed to evoke a rural setting but in a contemporary environment. The menu changes regularly but might include cod with oyster cream or a carrot-and-white-chocolate dessert.

MISS KO, PARIS

Acclaimed designer Philippe Starck is the brains behind Miss Ko, a scripted cacophony of colours, textures and objects. Guests can relax beneath a spectacular David Rochline fresco and beside an oversized teapot-cum-lamp, ordering spruced-up fare from around Asia: *bibimbap* burgers from Korea, teriyaki salmon yakitori and tuna tartare, anyone?

PUMP ROOM, CHICAGO

As interesting as Jean-Georges Vongerichten's farm-to-table menu is at Pump Room, the restaurant inside Ian Schrager's Public Chicago hotel, it's hard not to lose yourself in the design. Schrager's concept for the historic space sees Art Deco flourishes paired with modern elements, including a network of lights housed in resin globes.

THE JANE, ANTWERP

More than three years in the planning, this new Belgian restaurant occupies the former chapel of a military hospital. The space dazzles with soaring ceilings, chandeliers and custom stained glass, all revolving around original chapel details including the altar. Three-, five- and seven-course menus are fine dining, but with a playful twist.



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