

THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN Travel + LUXURY

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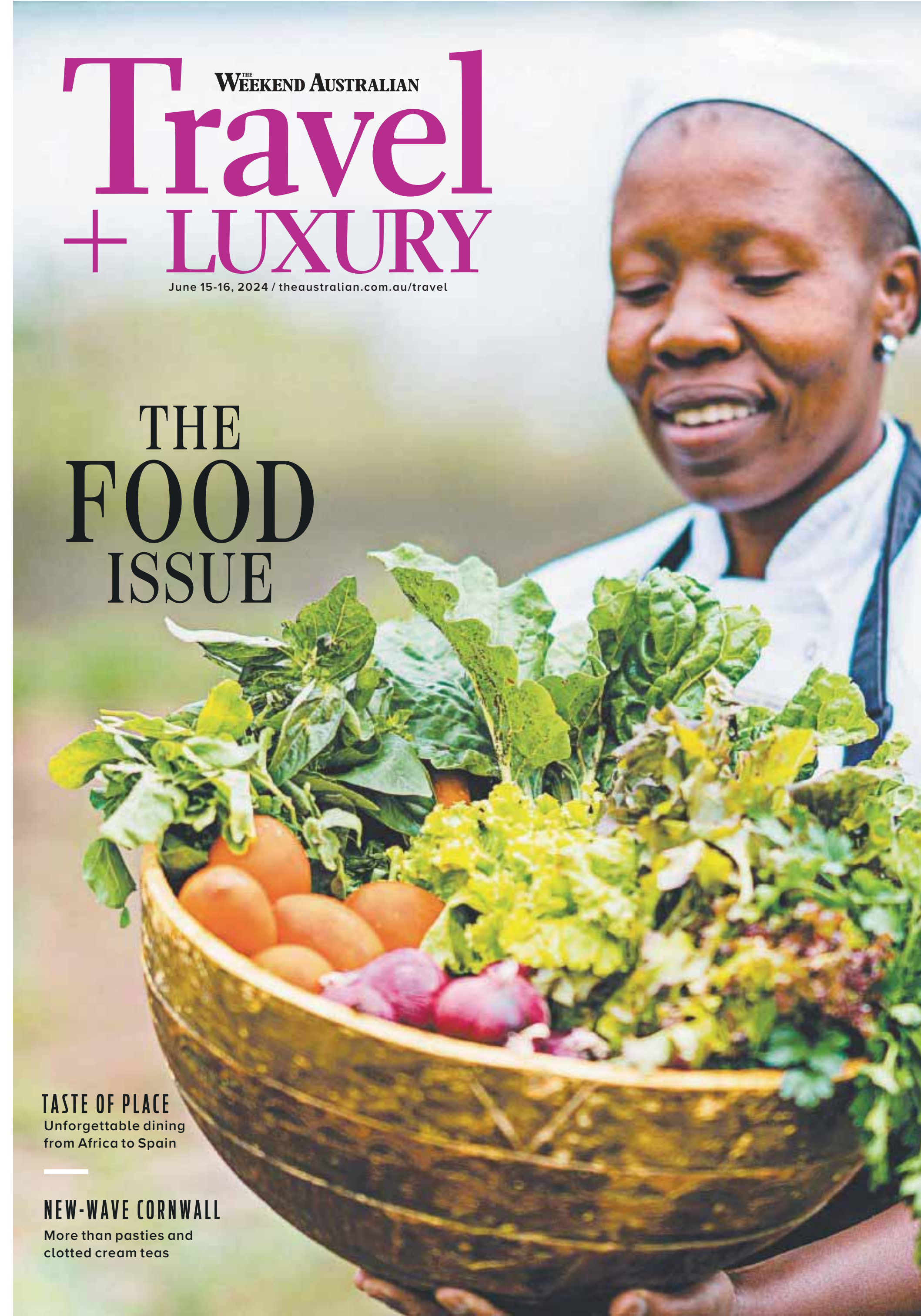
THE FOOD ISSUE

TASTE OF PLACE

Unforgettable dining
from Africa to Spain

NEW-WAVE CORNWALL

More than pasties and
clotted cream teas





GLOBAL HOTPOT

Whether it's a Michelin-star experience or the joy of discovering delicious street food, these dining experiences are sure to whet your appetite

NIKKI WALLMAN

Think of your most treasured travel memories and there's a strong chance many are linked to the sensory pleasures of a truly great bite of food and you can forever recall the place and the moment. Recent Skyscanner research shows just how central the joy of experiencing local flavours is to Australian travellers with 56 per cent of people nominating the sampling of local dishes as their favourite activity on holiday plus food is the third-biggest factor in choosing a destination.

It could be a big-ticket, credit card-damaging experience, glittering with Michelin stars; or the private joy of stumbling across a delicious secret.

My forever food memories tend to veer to the simple, like the day spent with three generations of my Cape Town family at Die Strandloper, a sandy-floored, open-ai red seafood spot in Langebaan, on the West Coast.

Ten courses stretched-out over hours with an Esky packed full of Windhoek lagers and crisp chenin blanc.

Sun-bleached buoys bobbing in the breeze; diamond-dappled sea beyond the boulders. Bare feet. Outdoor ovens stuffed with golden loaves of bread. Copper pots of garlicky mussels and huge griddles laden with sunset-orange crayfish, sweet smoke floating on guitar-strummed air. Strong coffee and syrupy koeksisters. Simple food, eaten in the sunshine, with people you love. Heaven. Create more memorable moments from these dining experiences from around the world.

Tom yum soup in Bangkok

Bangkok's street food scene is a chaotic urban symphony, hissing and steaming with colour and life. Four Seasons Bangkok at Chao Phraya River offers insightful China Town street food tours to those willing to tear themselves away from the serene riverside pool and dim sum at Michelin-starred fine diner Yu Ting Yuan.

Highlights include a third-generation family business slinging golden, pillowy pieces of freshly deep-fried Chinese dough, best dipped in pandan



Street food in Bangkok, left; on the deck of a cruise in Champagne, above; a boma at andBeyond Tengele River Lodge, below

coconut custard. A nearby corner spot serves perfectly balanced tom yum soup and a refreshing tangle of morning glory studded with tiny bulbs of Thai garlic and lashings of fresh chilli. Long queues are worth it for guay jub – intensely white-peppery broth, gloriously chewy rolled noodles and crisp, fatty pork belly playing against the pepper and pops of spring onion.

The adult children took over this popular stall, located under a movie theatre, after their father died of Covid. A picture of him is proudly displayed. Colour and life, continuing on.

fourseasons.com

Safari dining in Africa

There's a certain frisson that comes with sitting down to dinner knowing that just beyond your fence-enclosed boma, the lions are hunting their own. Flickering lamps hanging from trees, a turned-dirt floor, glittering glassware, crackle-spitting campfire, polished silverware. This is alfresco dining, safari style, complete with that wonderful hunger borne of adrenaline-fuelled days in the African bush.

At luxury conservation safari outfit Singita's camps, the dining concept was envisaged by chef Liam Tomlin, formerly of restaurant Banc Sydney, and enhances safari fare without losing its soul. Think gently spiced bobotie, kudu (antelope) with peppercorn sauce and more-ish sweet malva pudding. Round it out with superlative wines from South Africa's stalwarts and rising stars, and it's a memory you'll dine out on for years.

At andBeyond's Sabi Sands lodges, boma dining – just one of their sense-heightening, open-air dining experiences – may involve buffalo mozzarella salad with kombu (kelp) caviar; spicy chakalaka, or vanilla yoghurt mousse enlivened with lime cream and ginger crumble, savoured under the star-strewn sky.

singita.com
andbeyond.com



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Champagne cruising

What's better than tasting Champagne in Champagne? How about exclusive access to Ruinart's historic Taissy vineyard, as part of a seductive, slow-paced river sail?

The newly launched Coquelicot luxury barge from Belmond offers three double cabins with ensembles, champagne bar, lavish top deck for languorous indulgence, and private chef for all one's canape and al fresco dining desires.

Said chef joins Maison Ruinart's own Valerie Radou to create a decadent meal on board; think turbot with champagne sauce and asparagus, and pairings such as Dom Ruinart Champagne Brut Rose 2009.

This is eaten after a morning spent learning about Ruinart's ambitious viti-forestry project, enjoying on-site art installations and tasting its finest cuvees. The privately chartered journeys can be highly personalised, allowing you to bon-vivant your way along the river to your heart's delight. Prefer dry land? Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa offers a "champagne chauffeur" for exploring the region's top drops, and a 24-hour champagne trolley service.

belmond.com
royalchampagne.com

Hot-to-trot Texan barbecue

There's much debate about the best way to barbecue in Texas. What's not in question is the primal appeal of meat cooked low and slow, with rib-sticking sides to boot. Options span traditional briskets to various cultural influences. In Brownsville, close to the Mexican border, Vera's Backyard Bar-B-Que dishes up barbacoa de cabeza (barbecued cow's head), prepared in an underground pit – named an American classic by the James Beard Foundation. Tommy Woods of Travel

Texas taps KG BBQ in Austin as a favourite. "It's the perfect place to indulge in the authentic Texan feast, with an innovative twist, as the owner combines the flavours of Egypt and the middle east with the beloved Texan BBQ."

Austin also boasts Franklin Barbecue, where the late Anthony Bourdain drew global attention to this flame-fuelled meat mecca. Diehards can follow a Texas Barbecue Trail, tracking from Austin through smaller towns like Taylor, home to Louie Mueller Barbecue, and Lockhart – with a hearty finale in San Antonio.

traveltexas.com

Tokyo's freshest sushi

For insight into the upper echelons of Tokyo's dining scene, Rachel Lang of Plan Japan suggests a visit to the inner market at Toyosu, which is off-limits to mere mortals. Here, Tokyo's most renowned chefs – think Takashi Saito of Sushi Saito and Takaaki Sugita of Sugita – source their seafood in an intricate interplay of human relationships, prize catches and top dollar.

"The owners of restaurants that are impossible to book are in there so for foodies around the world, who know of these restaurants, seeing the chefs up close is what makes it so intriguing," she says.

"They spend their life making a relationship with the vendors, especially tuna dealers as tuna is the most expensive and difficult-to-source fish," explains Lang, who has cultivated an enviable network of closed-door contacts in Japan and so hence the insider access.

"The tuna dealer bids at the auction and then chooses which part goes to which chef." Lang will sometimes arrange samples, calling it "the freshest bowl of sushi you will ever have for breakfast in your life".

planjapan.com.au



Barbecue from The Pit Room, top right; Tsukiji fish market, above right; Pintxo in San Sebastian, bottom right and Grand Hotel Kronenhof

Fondue in the Swiss Alps

At Grand Hotel Kronenhof, an impossibly elegant, neo-Baroque bastion of Swiss alpine luxury tucked away in the pretty Engadin village of Pontresina, you can partake in a perfect Swiss fondue at Le Pavillon restaurant. Here, in a shaggy-cloaked seat overlooking the ice-skating rink with its cinematic snow-drenched mountain backdrop, you'll select a boiled potato from a sweet little bag – or a pickled onion perhaps, stabbed atop a cube of bread – and dip it into the bubbling pot, set atop a burner.

Swirl it around in the heavenly, molten gold mixture of cheese from an alpine producer right here in Pontresina, with a kick of kirsch.

Whatever you do, don't miss the deeply flavour-packed bits at the bottom; and a glass or two of Swiss pinot blanc to wash it down. And don't forget a slice of the decadent Engadine nut cake, with whipped cream and redcurrants. You can ski or skate it off later.

kronenhof.com

Pintxos in San Sebastian

The best things in life are ... bite-sized, at least in San Sebastian. Here the pintxos culture is a "a culinary journey through time, where every bite tells a story", says chef Elena Arzak of three Michelin-starred restaurant Arzak.

The iconic gilda pintxo taps into the Donostian obsession with seasonality and the practice of preserving the best produce for year-round enjoyment, she explains. Features include "Cantabrian anchovies caught in spring, salt-cured for months"; Guindilla peppers, "pickled as their summer season comes to a peak"; and the "gorgeous fatty mouthfeel" of briny olives. Just add vermouth.

Alongside the likes of Casa Urola and Bergara, Arzak recommends Ganbara, "a temple of fine product and our most traditional cuisine," where the spider crab tartlette – perfect with a glass of txakoli – "exemplifies the Basque commitment to using the finest ingredients in the most exquisite manner".

Ganbara's Jose Ignacio recommends Borda Berri, Martinez, La Vina, for its Basque burnt cheesecake; Paco Bueno; Arzak, for its batter fried shrimp; and Tamboril.

spain.info





Oysters from Freycinet Marine Farm; lunch served while standing in the waters, below left; ceviche in Lima, below right; the vineyards of Piedmont, bottom



Oysters from the source in Tasmania

It's one thing to slurp oysters in a candlelit bistro; quite another to do so while standing in the water they've just been plucked from, at Tasmania's Freycinet Marine Farm. Make a proper indulgence of it by staying at Saffire Freycinet, where they will orchestrate your visit.

Immersed amid the briny beauty of the landscape – waders and white tablecloth at the ready – you'll taste the Pacific oysters farmed here, alongside the likes of Kreglinger Brut from Northern Tasmania.

Says Hamish Cunningham, Saffire's guiding and activities manager: "We love to get guests out to the farm, develop a profound appreciation for how oysters are cultivated, and why this beautiful corner of paradise we call home is such a favourable spot for producing a premium product."

Hungry for more? Saffire Freycinet's new seafood and sparkling experience combines coastal cruising with sustainably-sourced seafood, paired with premium vintages from Tasmania's Jansz winery.

Happy as a clam, you'll be.
saffire-freycinet.com.au

Truffles and tajarin in Piedmont

When David Prior, co-founder and CEO of high-end immersive travel outfit Prior, thinks of Piemontese cuisine, one dish stands out: "For me, it is tajarin, a fresh pasta that is made with 40 egg yolks per kilogram of flour – that says everything about Piedmont."

The thin strands sing when simply accompanied by butter and Parmigiano; shave truffles over the top, "and

the dish soars," says Prior. "The simplicity belies its elegance and richness."

It is emblematic of this northwestern Italian region (also home to the Slow Food movement), where historic regal and rustic culinary influences both resonate.

Prior suggests driving 40 minutes south of Alba – home to autumn's White Truffle festival – to family-owned Trattoria del Bivio, for "arguably the best tajarin in the region".

Keen to join a truffle hunt?

Beware the tourist trap of pre-hidden tubers. "We work together with an association of young hunters who work in ethical ways," says Prior.

"Rain or shine, truffles or not, it is the real deal. We're proud of that."

priorworld.com
trattoriadelbivio.it



Seeking Ceviche in Lima

While global accolades point to the dynamism of Peru's high-end culinary scene with restaurants voted the world's best such as Central, chef Claudia Canessa, who grew up on the outskirts of Lima, says: "For me, street cuisine is the soul of the country." Canessa, who brings beautifully reimagined Peruvian street food to Amaru at Kulm Hotel in St Moritz, finds herself craving "cevicherias and local sushi" alongside other street food staples. "The best guide will always be people's recommendations," says Canessa. Chad Carey, managing director of Chimu Adventures, suggests La Mar Cebicheria and Pescados Capita-les in Miraflores; Canta Rana and El Muelle in Barranco; and Al Toke Pez and La Picanteria in Surquillo. Try Mayta for the likes of "Amazonian ceviche" of sea bass, ginger, Peruvian charapita chilli and fried plantains.

peru.travel/en

Markets are always a must-visit

Food markets are a gently thrilling snapshot of local life: not just food, but fashion, lifestyle; how people converse as the sun spotlights plump spears of white asparagus outside Torvehallerne in Copenhagen or noodles neatly curled like a grandmother's bun in Thailand's ancient town of Chiang Saen. At the former, you can marvel at the Danish sense of thrown-together cool, all oversized coats and hair twisted up, just-so. At the latter, admire the brightly striped fabrics of the Northern Thai hill tribes as they browse spiky bitter melons and small, extra-sweet pineapples. At Stora Saluhallen, in Gothenburg, you can perch at a blond-wood bar and order a wine with your fish soup. In Galle, in Sri Lanka, clay pots of fresh buffalo curd are piled high alongside glossy avocados at the fruit market, and just-hooked fish are displayed metres from the seashore. Nearby Aman Amangalla offers a beautifully imagined food market tour, cooking class and serves a cracking lobster pasta.

aman.com