



Issue 30
May / June 2022

offsite

WORK HARD, PLAY HARD

Tradie Profile:
Penny Thackwray

Soft-Baiting Basics

The Great
Tradie Fish Off
Roundup

LIVING OFF OUR LAND

A photograph of two men in a workshop or garage setting. The man on the left is wearing a bright green polo shirt, a black baseball cap with sunglasses perched on it, and black shorts. The man on the right is wearing a red and black plaid shirt, khaki shorts, and has a large tattoo on his left arm. They are both looking down at a piece of paper held by the man on the right. In the background, a white car is partially visible.

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'We'll see you right'





Contents

- 04** M2 Over Our Land
- 10** Dream Day on the Tools
- 16** Tradie Profile
- 22** Soft-Baiting for Dummies
- 26** Outdoors with Geoff
- 28** Perfect BBQ Chicken Wings

Welcome to Issue Thirty of Rheem offsite

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Cover Photo Cam Henderson

It's been a hell of a summer.

It doesn't matter which part of this beautiful country you call home, there's been non-stop action from coast to coast. Unusually warm ocean temperatures have created a gamefish eden, with billfish, mahi mahi, and southern bluefin tuna all showing up along the coast in good numbers, while record kingfish and snapper have been caught deep in the south. Multiple Pacific cyclones have added another element of fun by providing a pumping summer swell to keep the surfers frothing. For the hunters among us, this time of year means being out there chasing roaring stags and hopefully securing meat for the whanau.

In this issue of Rheem Offsite, legendary lad Ant Niterl takes us on a roady in the mac-daddy of Land Cruisers, courtesy of M2 Overland. Along the way he meets up with some other crack-up Kiwis who show him some of Aotearoa's wildest and most stunning places.

In "Dream Day on the Tools", Offsite veteran Struan Purdie gives us a glimpse into his working life as a photographer, taking us on an adventure to the Aldermen Islands as he tries to get his spear stuck into a few kingies, and even dabbles with a marlin.

In "Soft-baiting for Dummies", Nick Jones takes us through soft-baiting 101 in a super informative way that covers everything from gear and baits to location and technique. If he ever tries to get a book deal and turn his article into one of those black and yellow "For Dummies" books, at least none of you will need to buy it.

As always, get in touch if you have any stories of your own to share. Message us on Instagram (@offsite_magazine) or flick me an email at jason@nzfishingnews.co.nz. Enjoy!

– Jason Harman

M2 OVER OUR LAND

*Words by Ant Niterl
Images by Cam Henderson*

It sounds silly, but sometimes the stars align and you land your dream gig.

For a punter who constantly chases his passions and a laugh, these types of opportunities only come once in a life time. I'll be straight with you: I'm no outdoor, living off the land connoisseur, or a classic rural bloke with a "wealth" of experience. I'm a genuine battler (from Auckland) who has just so happens to have a group of down-to-earth kiwi mates who share their passions with me – while in return I provide low-level sub-par chat, and usually a suitcase of cleansing ales for their worries.

While on the blower with Cam Henderson, the bright & intelligent spark behind *'The Hunter's Journal'* magazine, he told me he wanted me to join him for a drive from the nose to the toes of the country, in a decked-out Toyota Land Cruiser, gathering off the land with a few special, salt-of-the-earth Kiwis. As he laid out details of the plan, I genuinely couldn't believe what was tickling my ears.

I packed my bags and made a bee-line to Hawkes Bay, where the beastly Toyota had recently been torn apart and reconstructed into one of the prettiest, mud-eating monsters

any man or woman has ever laid their eyes on. Brandon Duncan, owner and mastermind behind M2 Overland, greeted me at the door of the workshop while his passionate, work horse team made a few finishing touches to the four-wheeled eyeball-pleasing machine. Then, with a simple turn of the ignition, a grungy, throbbing sound harmonically echoed around the garage. I never thought I'd admit that a car made me weak at the knees – but I just did.

The beautiful 79 series Land Cruiser had been decked out in the new Trek-R aluminium tray system, meaning the truck was essentially a Swiss army



The mighty Land Cruiser
eating boulders for breakfast.



Ant met up with some hilarious Kiwi characters on his road trip around the country.

knife on wheels. Personally, I got in the habit of calling it the “Kim K on wheels” instead: stunning blinkers, sexy chassis, bolt-ons here and there, and, last but not least, some junk in the trunk. This home-away-from-home also boasted a headboard-mounted 55 Litre water tank, under-mounted tool boxes, Redarc Redvision Battery Management System, central locking, a fridge, SMRT tent, and dog box – just to name a few features. To be honest, I was happy with just the dog box, given my previous track record...

I was anxious to take the keys from Brandon’s tight, clammy grip, but he hesitated and looked at me nervously. I think he could sense I couldn’t wait to rip this beast a new one. But he handed them over anyway, and rip it a new one I did...

The mission was simple. Four trips, off the beaten track, with some bloody neat Kiwis. And we’d film the whole thing as a series of episodes (check out “Hunger for Our Roots” on YouTube). I’ve never had so many head turns as I did driving around in that zooped-up Land Cruiser, and boy did I lap it up.



“The beastly Toyota had recently been torn apart and reconstructed into one of the prettiest, mud-eating monsters any man or woman has ever laid their eyes on.”

The first stop saw us camping and river-hopping through the Kaimanawa Ranges, where I met up with M2 Overland's brand ambassadors, Dan and Rosie Tong. Those two live and breathe off-roading, sika hunting, and beer sipping, all while running a successful engineering company. They were my partners in crime in the mountains, and jeez did they deliver the goods. I bathed in their wealth of knowledge and relished the camping experience.

The next stage of the trip was not all hunky dory though. A few hiccups meant that we needed to change plans quickly and make tracks to Christchurch to beat a massive weather bomb. With episode two in ruins, a rescue plan was hatched that would

see Dan and fellow M2 Overland ambassador, Tommy Montaperto, try to resurrect our failed plans and attempt to put a Sika on the ground to save the episode. Brandon wasn't happy with my departure and decided to lay down a challenge: "If my guys get a deer on the deck and successfully pull this episode from the dark, unsalvageable depths, then you are hitchhiking your way down south...naked".

Now, let's be honest: I thrive on being nude, even with my hideous carcass. So, it wasn't the worst punishment I could imagine. And, with a few shots fired by Dan and Tommy, the stars aligned to keep the punters happy. Watch episode two online to find out how the cookie really crumbled...

East coast up the Rakaia came

There's not much this rig can't do. And with the M2 Overland Trek-R tray system, you can have your creature comforts too.





with no surprises. Swollen rivers, nasty sandstorms, beautiful country, and impressive animals. Jared Hammond, a Kiwi-turned-Yukon guide navigated us through the niggly, jarring terrain. Because of the failing weather encroaching, we had a total of one day out of our proposed five day trip to try and create an opportunity on foot. Luckily, we hadn't stumbled more than 500m from camp when we were greeted with the soul-penetrating eyes of an old, beat-up Chamois buck. After 30 minutes of conversing, we set up the shot on a dry, nasty riverbed and let rip from 409m out. The Hardy hybrid rifle was too deadly, and it absolutely poleaxed the old boy on his perch. The king of the hill was no more...

The next session was on the west coast alongside notorious cowboy of the west, Josh James: "The Kiwi Bushman". And it was wet again. But the boys were not going to let a bit of precipitation rain on their parade. We did everything from ripping and tearing up the local river in jet boats and skull-dragging blue nose from 400m deep, to pushing the camping envelope out in luxury, all while in the middle of a

horrendous storm. It was safe to say, west was wet, but best.

The climax of this series saw our big wheels kiss the tarmac along the road to Lake Hawea station, where the Ross family hosted us on their zero emissions farm. Our goal was to offset the emissions we had created on our journey by planting some trees, then head to the hills for some conservation in the form of slaying a few niggly pigs and picking ourselves up a yearling for the summer BBQ.

It is every blokes dream to do this roady, and I feel incredibly blessed to have been chosen to tell the story. To see the journey of 'Sandy' using all of your senses, head to M2 Overland's YouTube channel and feast your eyes! Or even better, if you want a similar deck on the back of your Ute, then just sign it off with the Mrs, sit back, and enjoy the greatest investment of your life.



Even the local wildlife got a fondling at the Ross family farm.





Lining up the Chamois from the dusty valley floor. Thank god someone knew what they were doing!

This Chamois found himself in the wrong place at the right time.

**“The mission was simple:
four trips, off the beaten track,
with some bloody neat Kiwis.”**

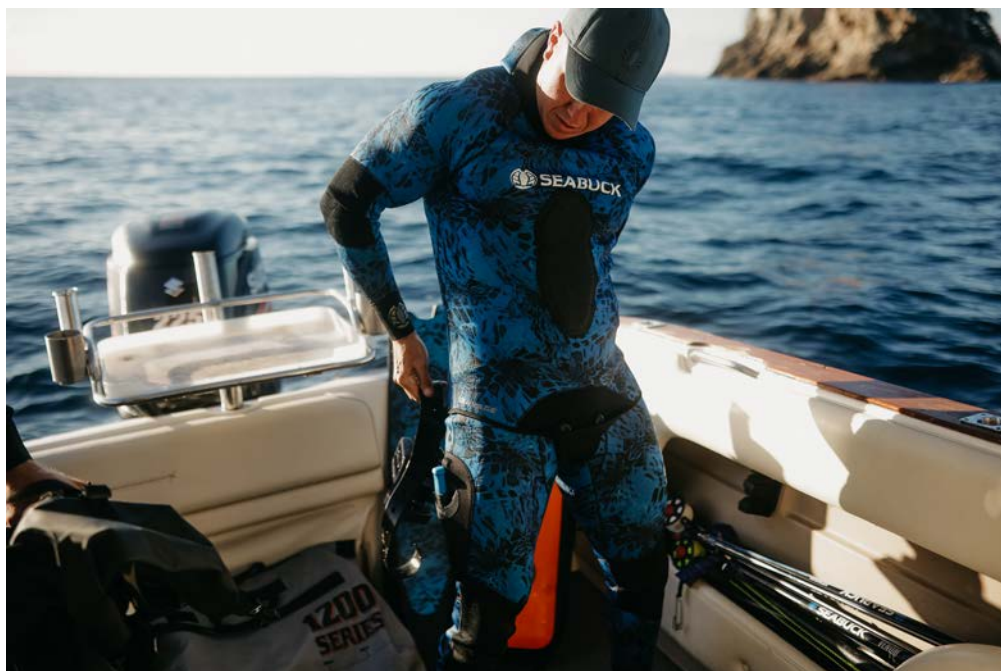


A DREAM DAY ON THE TOOLS

Words and images by Struan Purdie







Ollie Craig gets kitted up in his bluewater suit for the dive.

Earlier this year, I got a brief from a client to photograph a bunch of new spearfishing gear. The only issue: I'm based in Canterbury, which is not known for its great water clarity – most of the year I'm lucky if I can see the end of my fins. I insisted that we head north in search of big kingfish and some good vis. After signing this off with the client, a plan was hatched with Ollie Craig, one of the brand's ambassadors from Auckland. We planned to base ourselves out of Whitianga and dive the offshore islands for a couple of days.

Our first morning was an early one, with the boat in the water well before sunrise. The plan was to head out to the Aldermen Islands, where reports suggested some awesome conditions. On our way over we stopped at Castle Island: an exposed dot of land with plenty of current. As we jumped in, we were greeted by some incredible viz and a huge school of kahawai. The underwater scenes were stunning, and I got to work immediately – snapping the first stills of the trip. After half an hour in the water we had some great images,

though only a few small kingfish had been sighted, so we decided to carry on to the Aldermens.

What awaited us was a South Island spearo's wet dream – inky blue water with workups exploding all around us. We frantically flopped off the boat and were greeted with the best dive conditions I've ever seen in New Zealand. The bottom was clearly visible 25 metres below, and the bait fish were in abundance. We dived with the current, allowing it to drag us around the point as we dropped down repeatedly in search of kingfish. After 20 minutes or so, we drifted across a shallow reef and Ollie made another big drop. I positioned myself off his

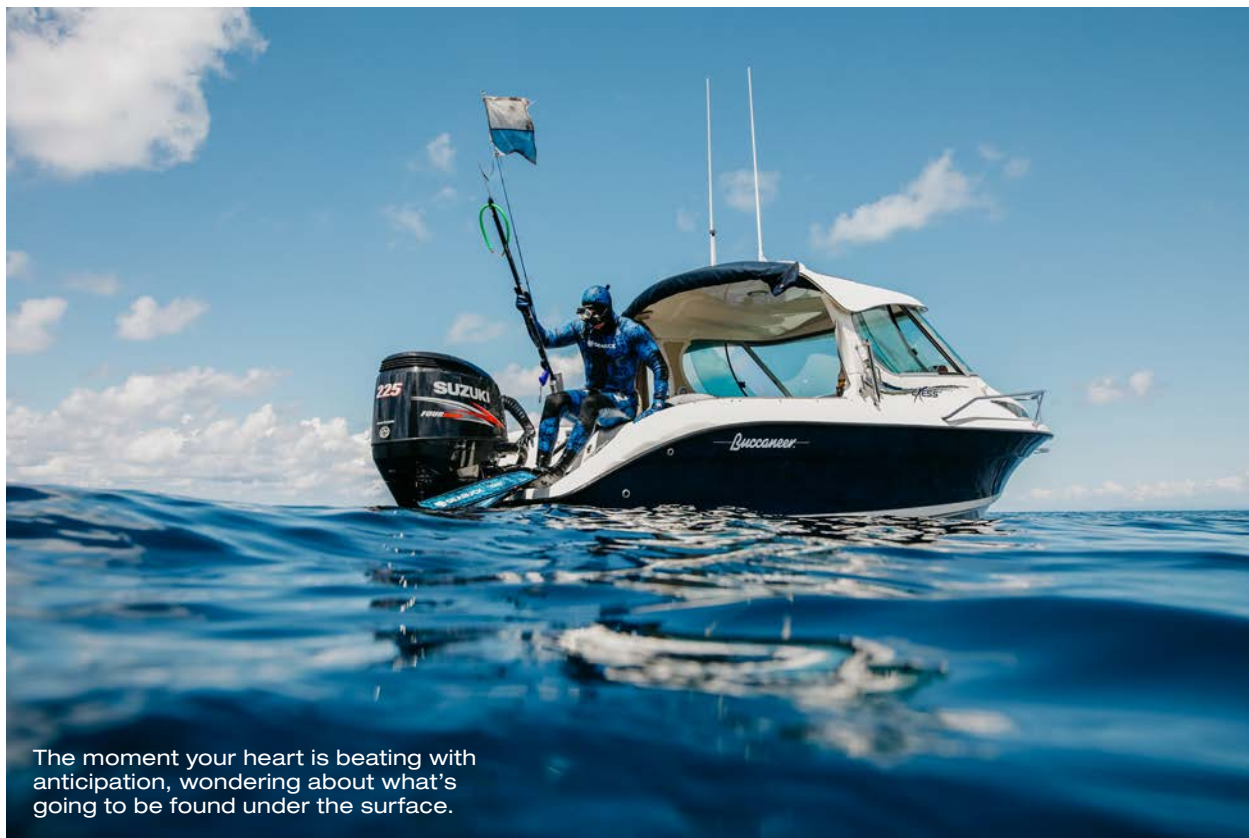
firmly by the gills. We were officially on the board for the day!

Back at the boat, I snapped a couple more photos, then we motored back up current for another dive. This time, we had some unwanted visitors. Half-a-dozen bronze whaler sharks had turned up, no doubt in search of a free feed. It's amazing how much of a difference good visibility makes when diving with sharks – much better than a pointy snout suddenly appearing out the gloom a foot in front of you! A couple more solid kingies showed up but we opted to avoid the inevitable feeding frenzy and instead focused on getting some cool footage of the sharks. I've hunted and dived all my

“What awaited us was a South Island Spearo's wet dream – inky blue water with workups exploding all around us.”

shoulder just as two solid looking kingfish swam into view. As the fish drifted past, Ollie extended his gun and plugged the front one just behind the head. After a quick tussle, he had it

life, but swapping the gun for a camera in recent years has rekindled my love for these sports. Not only have I honed new skills, but I've also felt a much greater sense of satisfaction from an

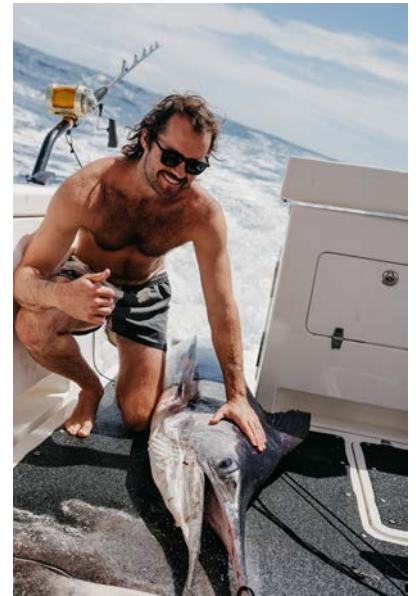


The moment your heart is beating with anticipation, wondering about what's going to be found under the surface.





A 100kg blue is not a bad effort from a bunch of spearos.



“We rushed outside to find one reel spooling flat out. A pair of bright blue dorsal fins could be seen weaving back and forwards in our wake.”



Ollie Craig and Josh Coombridge are the type of outdoorsy blokes you'd want to have around in an apocalypse.



image captured vs an animal taken.

The rest of the day was fairly uneventful, with a couple more incredible dive spots but no fish worthy of the chilly bin. On our way home, we stopped off at one of Ollie's honey holes to try to grab a couple of crayfish and complete our seafood fry-up for the evening. The next day, a good friend of mine – Josh Coombridge – decided to join us as we headed out to the Mercury Islands on a launch. Unfortunately for him, a feral battered mussel the night before had inflicted a wicked bout of food poisoning, so he wasn't in the best shape.

Our first dive of the day was fishy but lacked the stunning visibility of the Aldermen's. Ollie plugged a nice 15kg kingfish and Josh slammed a much larger model that unfortunately ripped off before he could secure it. After a couple of hours, the call was made to hang up the wetsuits and head further out to sea for an afternoon of gamefishing. I was more than happy to do this – after eight hours in the water the day prior (and a couple of late nights) I was pretty stuffed. I wandered inside the cabin to join a very pale Josh who'd passed out on the couch. Less than an hour later we were awoken by an incredibly high-pitched scream. We rushed outside to find one reel spooling flat out. A pair of bright blue dorsal fins could be seen weaving back and forwards in our wake.

Then, suddenly, a second reel lit up. It was on! After clearing the rest of the rods, Josh and I (being the only marlin-virgins aboard) were quickly rigged up and told to start winding. The weight was unbelievable – certainly a step up



from the southern blue cod I was used to hauling in. Miraculously, Josh had recovered from his mussel-induced misery and was absolutely pinging as he wound furiously. His was the first fish to the boat – a small blue marlin in the 70-80kg range. Unfortunately, in the subsequent carnage of trying to gaff the fish the lads made an absolute meal of it, resulting in the marlin spitting the hook and escaping just inches from the side of the boat. After a serious debrief, along with some savage heckling, it was time for redemption.

My fish began to tire as I wound in the last 100 metres of line. Once I reached the leader, it was up to the boys. This time they got it right. With two separate gaffs in place, they dragged the beast aboard. I was speechless. The hulking blue marlin

seemed massive to me, though I was quickly informed that it was a fairly compact model – just over 100kg. After a couple of photos, we got to work breaking the fish down and packing the fillets on ice. The steam back to Whitianga was one big celebration as we reflected on what we'd managed to pull off in just two short days. To say the client was stoked with the images we delivered would be an understatement, though they were equally disappointed to have missed out on the action. Needless to say, we've already started planning our next "work" trip for next summer.



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PENNY THACKERAY

Penny is well into the second year of her apprenticeship and absolutely loving it.



Sparkie, Spearfisher, & Workaholic

It all started as a joke for Penny.

“Why don’t you just become a sparkie?” one of her good friends quipped at her one day when Penny was at a loose end. He wasn’t serious but, as became increasingly clear throughout our conversation, Penny doesn’t shy away from a challenge. “That was that,” she told me, which can also be roughly translated to “challenge accepted.”

“I hadn’t thought of a career as a sparkie being something that not a lot of girls do,” she explained to me over the phone. “I just thought, I can’t cope with sitting in an office all day and I don’t want to leave my home town, so my best option is actually be a tradie. I started looking into it, and also started hanging out with other tradies a lot, and then I just decided: this is what I want to do.”

Flash forward 18 months and Penny is now roughly half-way through her apprenticeship and absolutely loving it. In fact, she loves the work more than any tradie I’ve ever spoken to.

“It’s not easy work, and we do often

work on weekends, but it’s what I want to do. I don’t like free time if it’s bad weather. I just get bored and go crazy.”

Evidence for this can be found in how hard it was to arrange this interview. We eventually caught up at 5:30pm on a Monday, and it seemed to be one of the very few times Penny wasn’t on the worksite – organising an interview with a tradie who loves work is no easy feat.

While she was adamant about her love for work (despite my incredulity), she did admit that it wasn’t all smooth sailing. Robert Gibson Electrical have been amazing, she explained, but not every company is as open minded.

“I couldn’t get a job for a while because as soon as I said my name and put my CV in, people just said no. It took nearly a year to find a company that would take me on as an apprentice.”

Robert Gibson Electrical gave her the chance she needed.

“My boss was a lot more accepting. I showed up in my truck, which I think made a difference. It helped that I didn’t

Penny's prized Hilux, which helped her make a successful first impression with the boss.



drive a Suzuki Swift," she joked.

"The boss said that I could start the next day and agreed to a week's trial – but the first day sucked. I knew it was what I wanted to do, but in a year's time when I actually knew what I was doing. I'm extremely shy and looking like an idiot is my worst fear. It didn't help that I was just the stupidest looking person you've ever seen," she laughed. "Tradie boots just don't fit my feet. They don't sell hi-vis that fits me at all, so I had to cut them all in half. I just looked so stupid. No one said anything, but you could tell what they were thinking. You get some funny looks when you show up at people's houses and your shirt is ripped in half and you trip over your boots because they're too big.

"My boss is awesome though. He never treated me any different. He told me to carry things as heavy as everyone else... it was just made completely normal."

Being the only woman on site also didn't excuse Penny from the usual apprentice treatment.

"My first few weeks were spent looking for left-handed screwdrivers, enjoying long waits at the electrical suppliers store, losing tools, learning to be a good roof crawler, and getting the 'wee' taken out of my hamper."

"So, when did you start enjoying it?" I asked – a question I often ask tradies who share their hazing stories.

"After two or three months. I started to go the gym, which helped a lot," she said, laughing again.

While the vast majority of her experiences have been positive on site, there are still those around who make Penny's life challenging.

"There's a few people that my boss doesn't let me go on site with because they're really weird. We've got it down pat now, where I do and don't go... It doesn't bother me at all now, but it used

"You get some funny looks when you show up at people's houses and your shirt is ripped in half and you trip over your boots because they're too big."

Penny's personal best fish – an estimated 30kg Northland kingie.





to – I used to find it awkward. Guys used to see it like I could never make anything of this job because I'm too weak. But it's all about confidence.

"As time has gone on I've gotten more comfortable with being different and being a female in a trade, which was one of the more difficult things I've done. When I started, there were plenty of comments I had to ignore from clients and friends, but now I feel like I'm being treated the same as anyone else in a trade – I even have a backup pink tool kit and hi-vis which I like to lend to the new apprentice for the good banter. Couldn't be happier with my trade, and I even like roof crawling!"

Another massive positive of working for Robert Gibson Electrical is that Penny has had plenty of opportunities to pursue her other passion: spearfishing.

"I started diving maybe three or four

years ago during my last year of school. My family lives in Mahinepua Bay [Northland] and we had some friends stay with us for eight months. We were all diving for eight hours a day and not getting a lot else done."

"I hated school so much. It was the worst time of my life. I just kept to myself and spent all my spare time spearfishing. I used to stay home from school and go diving all day, every day. I didn't go to school in year 13 more than once a week, but I got all my NCEAs and didn't drop out!"

As can be expected, she's now ticked off a fair few solid fish, including a 19.2lb snapper and an estimated 30kg kingie. It was the latter that provided a bit of drama.

"This one was funny. I took my sister for a dive and it was her first time ever, so I took her back to the beach before I made a berley. Then, I went out to



Penny spends every spare moment on or under the water.



Penny's home patch in Northland – perfect diving territory!

my usual rock, made my berley, and a kingfish came in quickly. I shot it and pulled it up onto the rocks so my sister could see it.

“I used my knife to kill it, and my sister was a bit scared and ran away and went back to the house. I then swam back out into the water where all the blood was and a big shark was there. It was my first time seeing a shark by myself as I usually use shell berleys, so I went back to the rock and waited for hours until I could wave a boat down to pick me up! I like sharks now, but I was so scared at the time!”

On top of spearfishing, she's also been a keen hunter in the past, and more recently has been getting into gamefishing with her boss.

“I don't have time for hunting anymore because I want to keep working. But I do more spearfishing because my boss and his family like to take time out when its good weather,

so if it's zero knots and 20m viz then we shoot out, even on a weekday.”

Looking forward, Penny has a few things on her life “to do” list. On top of finishing her apprenticeship, she's also keen to keep planting and selling nikau palms on her property – which I only learned about at the very end of our conversation. She has 800 at the moment, and that's what fills up her time in the holidays.

“So, you just don't stop?” I asked.

“Yeah, I drive everyone nuts,” she laughed.

I almost started this article by writing “Penny isn't your normal 19-year-old woman”, before I realised how silly that is. Penny is the third female tradie I've interviewed for this magazine, and it's clear that “normal” has been redefined. Old stigmas are dying, and it's tradies like Penny who are leading the way.



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Words and Images by Nick Jones

SOFT- BAITING FOR DUMMIES

Now, I'm not calling *offsite* readers dummies, but if you're looking for a quick way to catch a feed without too much thought, equipment, or skill – then this is the article for you!

“All colours seem to work on most species, but it pays to experiment on the day...”

The gear

You don't need to spend lots of money on gear to be successful when soft-baiting. In fact, there are plenty of decent rod and reel combos that come spooled-up for only a couple of hundred bucks. As an entry-level set, I'd go for a 2000-4000 size spinning reel loaded with 10-20lb braid, and a 7-8ft rod. Although lots of soft-bait rods are particularly bendy, I prefer 6kg+ weighted rods because they have a bit more oomph to set the hook when you get a bite. Towards the pointy-end, a metre or two of 20-25lb fluorocarbon leader, tied to a 3/8oz 1/0 size jig-head, is a good 'all-rounder' to suit a variety of fishing scenarios.

Speaking of all-rounders, it's hard to go past a 5' jerkshad for your lure. Good brands include the Daiwa Bait Junkies, Z-Mans and Berkley Gulpers. I'm also a fan of curly-tailed grubs and crazy-legs style lures because these

have an action built into their design that means the bait 'swims' on the descent (fishing without even trying – how good!). All colours seem to work on most species, although it pays to experiment on the day to see if the fish have any preferences. One important thing I've found is that baits with two contrasting colours tend to get more interest than ones consisting of a single shade. I tend to favour the more natural, duller colours such as: dark green, brown, purple, silver, and blue, but have been out-fished plenty of times by my flashier mates!

While it is possible to soft-bait from the shore (beach or rocks), this style of fishing really comes into its own when done from a vessel. However, you don't need a big vessel – kayaks are a great way to sneak around the shallows flicking soft-baits. You also don't need an anchor or a parachute – just drift along and start fishing. Too easy!



Soft-baiting is effective on a wide variety of species – Nick with a tasty gurnard caught using the idiot-proof rod-holder technique.

Nick pulled this rare slender tuna from a surface-school thanks to his Bruised Banana soft-bait.





What soft-baiting is all about – moochers from the shallows.

The spot

This is the simple part – you can catch fish on softies basically anywhere there is saltwater. Throw ‘em around mudflats, estuaries, harbours, channels, bays, beaches, rocky shores, underwater reefs, drop-offs, areas of surface-schooling fish, or deeper water offshore – you’ll catch fish. Most of my soft-baiting is for snapper. If I’m after a feed of “pannies” (especially in summer or autumn) I often don’t travel far and regularly fish in just a few metres of water over sand and mud close to Auckland City. If I’m after larger fish, I’ve found it pays to travel a bit further afield and throw soft-baits at exposed rocky coastlines and reefs. But you don’t need to exclusively fish deep water – aim for guts, current lines, back-eddies, and underwater reef edges – often the big moochers are lurking right up in the shallows.

“Generally speaking, fish should come back for a couple of cracks and you will usually hook them sooner or later.”

The technique

There are two basic techniques when soft-baiting. My preferred one is to cast ahead of my drift direction or directly at structure, and then let the lure free-fall to the bottom. I then work it back with a sequence of twitches as I lift the rod upwards, then a retrieval of the slack line as I drop the rod back down repeatedly. A lot of strikes tend to happen on the drop, so I always try to stay in contact with my line, trying to notice any unusual movement that might indicate a bite. Don’t be afraid to fish your soft-bait close to the bottom – sure you’ll end up losing some gear, but a lot of the better snapper will stay deeper amongst the rocks and kelp. Sometimes fish will engulf your soft-bait and you can’t miss them; other times

they will nibble away at the rear-end of your lure and you will need to time your strike to perfection. Generally speaking, fish should come back for a couple of cracks and you will usually hook them sooner or later.

The second most effective technique is classic fishing for dummies. Simply drop your soft-bait to the bottom, put your rod in the holder, and crack open a beer while you watch your drift do all the work as your soft-bait enticingly bounces along the bottom. However, if you want to really flex on your mates, you can employ both techniques at the same time and either catch two fish at once or cause a horrific tangle. Go well dummies!



THE GREAT TRADIE FISH OFF ROUNDUP

Year one of the Great Tradie Fish Off is all done and dusted, and we were stoked to see so many of you tradies get on board!

Come game day, we had over 1000 tradies registered to fish the comp, as well as over \$15,000 worth of prizes to hand out at prizegiving. We started to get nervous when a full 9 days of easterlies was forecast, but we should have known tradies don't let a bit of wind and rain slow them down. Catches started pouring in from day one, and by 3pm on the final day of the competition, 339 fish had been submitted. It was awesome to see a release rate of nearly 30%, which is a massive advantage of measure-only comps – the angler can decide whether they take a fish home to feed the whanau or release it to swim another day.

At 7:30pm on Saturday the 12th March, we went live on Instagram to announce the winners, and there were a few last minute surprises.

On the final day of the comp, we had three snapper entered at or above the magic 80cm mark. Scott Franks and James Tulloch caught their snapper on soft-baits (2nd and 3rd place respectively), while Steve Dare took out the coveted first place snapper with his 86.0cm bait-caught snapper.

Blake Cooper was the late arrival to the kingfish leaderboard, nabbing third place with his Kings Bank 127.0cm kingfish with only minutes to go. Carl Henty's 128.0cm model was enough



to land him second prize, and Sam Mucalo's 134.0cm Middlesex Bank kingie took first place honours.

The kahawai leaderboard was a tight affair. Stuart Holly's and Gavin Sutton's 59.5cm entries earned them a share of second place, while Hemi Woodhose's monster 60.0cm kahawai couldn't be moved from first place.

There were also two prizes up for grabs that didn't rely on catching big fish. The average snapper category was taken out by Wayne Hickham thanks to his 50cm entry. The Caught on Catch prize – an overnight trip to Great Barrier aboard Wave Dancer Charters for two – was won by Ian Perdersen, who caught his 48.5cm snapper on a Catch Livie soft-bait and Catch jighead.

Congrats to all of the winners and a big thank you to all of our sponsors for making the comp happen! The conversations about how to make year two of The Great Tradie Fish Off even bigger and better are already well underway, so watch this space!





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OUTDOORS WITH GEOFF



The Tauranga team landed three nice trout on Tarawera.

What do you after two years of being locked down? Why, you jump in the car and drive to Rotorua and go Outdoors with Geoff – and Rheem.

That is exactly what Mico's Blair Ferguson did last month, and he took along customers Phil Smith and Simon Dombroski from Tauranga. Their three-day adventure started with an evening on Lake Tarawera where they soon boated three nice rainbow trout, with help from Rheem's John Bebbington who looked after the catering.

"We actually have a rule on the boat that you can't have a beer until you catch a trout, but we sometimes work on credit," said Geoff. "But we didn't need to use credit as the boys caught the fish pretty quickly." The trout went into the smoker at Geoff's lodge, Rainbow's Return, and the plan was to take them into the hills at Ngamatea Station the following day, but when the boys tasted the fish hot from the smoker, it all disappeared.

After meeting hunting guide Russell Anderson at the gate to the station the following afternoon, the team took RAT tests for Covid. Such is the new world we live in. No problems thankfully!

Blair and Simon are experienced hunters, but Phil had never shot a deer; in fact, he had never even shot at a deer, so Russell ran him through the process: get in a good position, tuck the rifle butt in tight against the shoulder and slowly squeeze the trigger. The boys saw a lot of deer the first evening and Simon dropped the first Sika at over 300 metres. There are a lot of long shots when hunting this open country, but the deer don't know you are there and you can take your time. It helps when you are shooting with Russell's hand loads and he adjusts the scope for distance and windage. All you have to do is put the crosshairs on the animals' shoulder and



A magnificent 10-point sika stag, which is very unusual as they normally have only eight points, or tines.



Simon is rapt with his first shot.

Phil is over the moon with his first deer – a fat sika hind.



“There are a lot of long shots when hunting this open country, but the deer don’t know you are there and you can take your time.”

Simon lines up a deer while Russell looks on, with Phil in the background.



squeeze the trigger. It sounds easy but it is never truly that simple.

Phil crawled up a little ridge with Russell next and the first animal he lined up dropped cold. “Fantastic!” was the verdict from the newly-blooded hunter. They returned to the hut after dark with three animals in the back of the CanAm – a good start.

The morning hunt the next day saw us hang another three deer in the meat safe. As everybody wanted meat for the freezer, the plan was to try for another two or three in the afternoon. The shooting was impressive. Phil turned

out to be a natural and dropped three deer with three shots. The Tauranga team kept lining up the animals and when it was time to load the vehicles the following morning, they had more than a dozen deer, which they skinned ready for the home-kill butcher in Rotorua to turn into sausages, steaks and patties.

“That was one of the best hunting trips I have ever been on,” said Simon.

Phil is also ready to do it again. “A really great couple of days,” he reckoned. “And catching the trout was a bonus!”



Rheem proudly supports Save the Kiwi to achieve their goal and take kiwi from endangered to everywhere. If you’d like to take part and help save New Zealand’s national icon, go to www.savethekiwi.nz/donate – Your donation will help hatch and raise kiwi chicks in safety, increase kiwi populations, and protect wild kiwi habitat.

PERFECT BARBEQUED CHICKEN WINGS

Recipe, words and Images
by Kezza Packer

What you will need:

- 1kg of whole chicken wings or nibbles (defrosted)
- Chicken rub (off the shelf or homemade)
- Kettle style charcoal barbeque
- Aprox 1kg of hot burning coal (lump is best but briquettes work well)
- Charcoal starter chimney
- Vortex or “Poortex”
- Cherry or plum wood chunks
- Instant read thermometer
- Barbeque sauce
- Hot sauce to taste
- Metal bowl and roasting pan



Recently, I was put on the spot and asked: “What is your favourite protein to barbeque and eat?” Without really thinking, I blurted out, “Chicken wings, of course!” That reply took us both a little by surprise.

I love cooking and eating all of the big barbeque cuts, like brisket, ribs, and beef cheeks, so what is it about

barbequed chicken wings that takes out my personal “top spot”?

Firstly, chicken wings are fairly cost-effective in a world where most produce is skyrocketing in price. They are also reasonably simple to prepare, and by barbeque standards quick to cook. But the clincher for me is this: when done to succulent perfection they are super

satisfying on the plate and on the palate – a real crowd pleaser. Barbequed chicken wings can be dressed up “hot n’ spicy”, “middle of the road”, or “Plain Jane” (or a mixture to suit the different tastes around the table).

Without further ado, let’s get stuck in to see how I go about making perfect barbequed chicken wings.

METHOD:

1

If using whole wings, I like to break them down into nibbles (flats and drumettes), and use the tips to make a lush chicken stock. You can barbeque the complete wings whole, but butchering them up will make the cooking process easier.

2

In a roasting pan or large bowl, apply your favourite chicken rub and mix by hand to achieve even coverage. Set aside for at least 10mins.

3

Using a charcoal starter chimney, get your coals ashed-over and white hot. This can take up to 15 or so minutes, so allow for this step in your overall timing.

4

When ready, place coals into a Vortex or "Poortex" in this case (metal bowl with the bottom cut out). Ensure the coals are in the centre of your kettle barbeque. A Vortex-style device and setup like this funnels the heat directly onto the lid of your barbeque and "smashes" it back down to the chicken – this gives an even cook and nice crispy skin without any potential burning.

5

Place the cherry wood chunks on the grill directly above the coals to get some authentic barbeque flavour profile into your wings. Cherry wood pairs perfectly with chicken, but plum is a great alternative option. With the bottom and top vents wide open, put the lid back on the barbeque and give it 10 or so minutes to come up to grilling temperature.

6

Once your barbeque is properly hot – at around 300°C – arrange the chicken wings evenly, away from the direct heat of the coals. Place the thickest ends of the wings nearest the coals. The set up can get pretty "OCD" for regular chicken wing cooks, but there is a method to the madness and that is getting an even cook across all portions. Put the lid back on, have a refreshing ale and prepare your sides.

7

After approximately 15 minutes, the wings should be starting to colour up nicely with a rich mahogany look and a divine aroma in the air from the smoking wood. Turn the wings over.

8

After a further 10 minutes or so, use an instant read thermometer to check the wings for doneness. For perfectly cooked wings, I aim for 85°C (185°F). Getting the internal temperature up to this heat will ensure they are safe to eat, cooked to 'white' all the way to the bone, succulent, juicy and with a crispy skin – perfect!

9

In a metal bowl or pot, add around one cup of your favourite barbeque sauce as a base for your glaze. From there, experiment by adding butter, garlic, hot sauce, soy sauce, rib glaze, or whatever else you fancy. Remove any charred smoking wood from the barbeque and place the sauce directly above the coals to simmer. You will need to keep an eye on it at this stage and stir regularly as the sugars will easily burn. It should only take a few minutes to start caramelizing and simmering down. The goal is "sticky".

10

Remove the wings and place into a metal roasting pan. Pour the sauce directly over the chicken and ensure the wings are covered well.

11

Place the oven pan over coals for a minute or two, stirring the entire time – and then they are done!

12

Serve as an entrée, a halftime feed during the rugby, or as a main with barbequed sweetcorn, a sweet coleslaw, mac 'n' cheese, potato salad, or whatever takes your fancy.



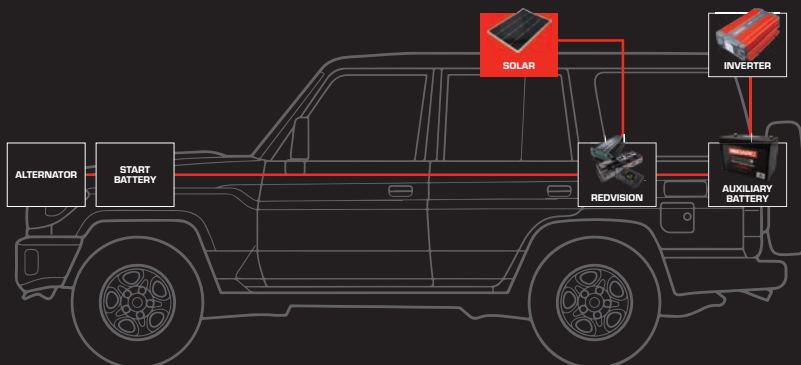
There you have it – a simple, quick, delicious way to make the humble chicken wing into something pretty special.

**UNTIL NEXT TIME -
HAPPY BARBEQUING!**

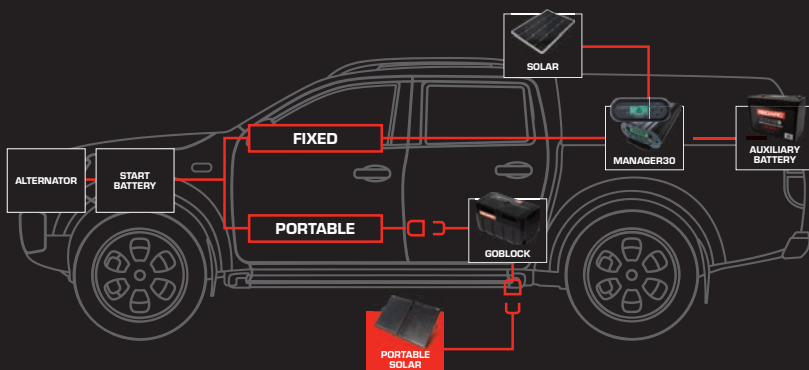
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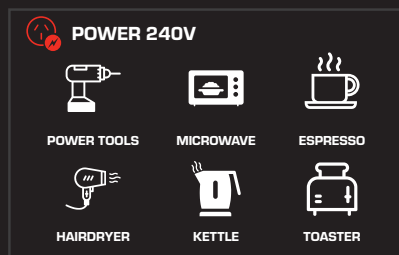
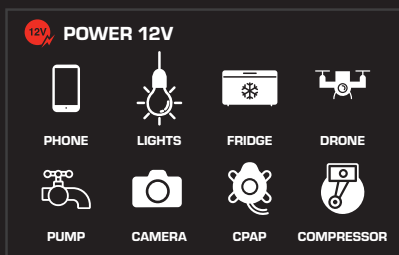
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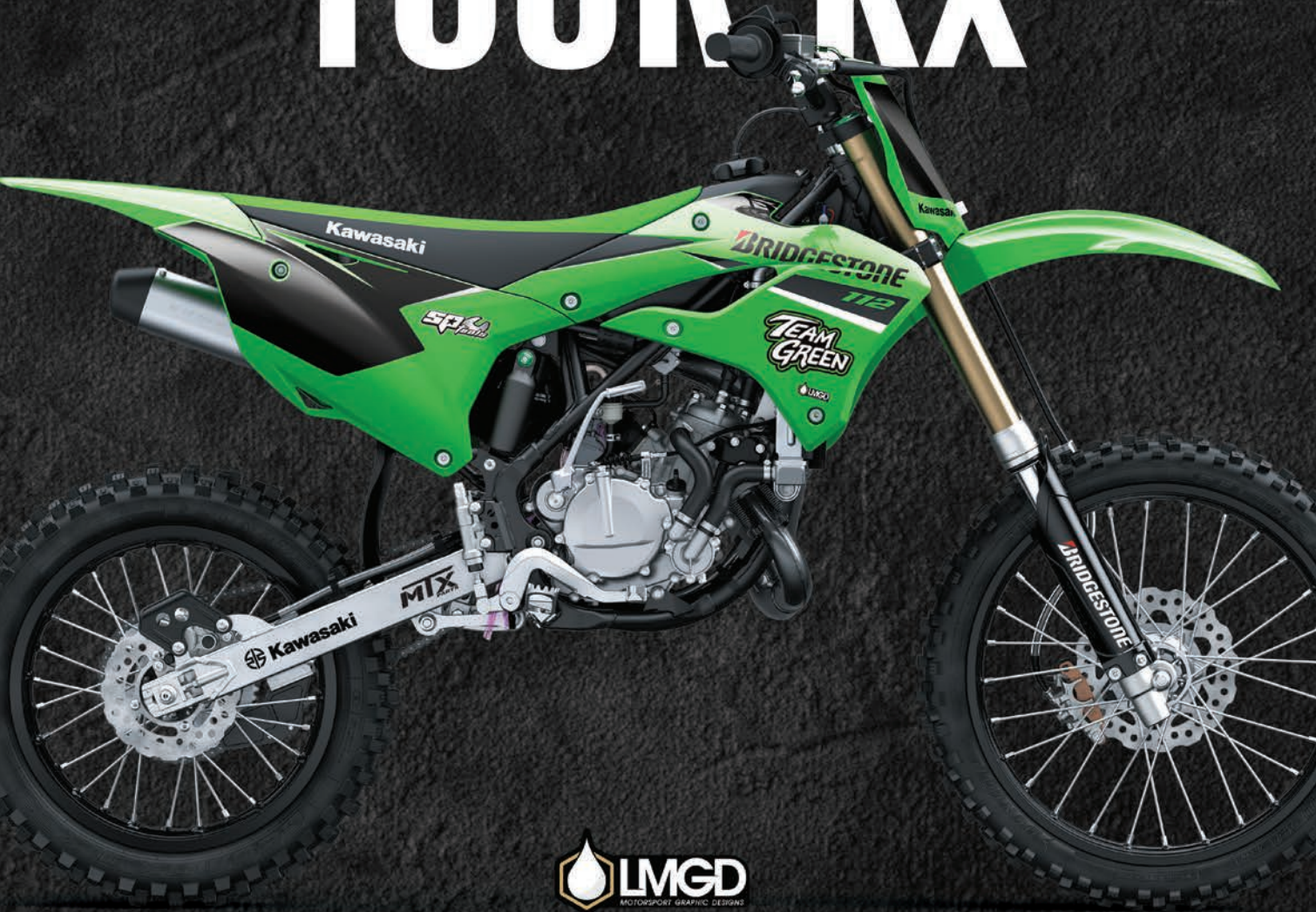
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