



Issue 34
January / February 2023

offsite

WORK HARD, PLAY HARD



WEST COAST VAN TRIP

Tradie BBQ
Summer Fishing

A photograph of two men in a workshop or garage setting. The man on the left is wearing a bright green polo shirt with an ITM logo, 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 white sheet of paper held by the man on the right. The background is slightly blurred, showing shelves and equipment.

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Welcome to Issue 34 of Rheem offsite

What a time to be alive. The sun is strong, and the waters are glassy. The birds are chirping, and the cicadas are belting out power ballads. The outdoors are calling your name!

“Summer is what summer is, only because there is winter.”

While I leave you to cogitate on that gem of wisdom, let me remind you that your previous self (that pasty, slightly chubby, winterised version) made all sorts of plans and promises in the depths of winter’s darkness – hopes and dreams for the future; ambitions for those long, bright summer days when anything is possible. Well, that time is now and this issue of Rheem Offsite is here to remind you that there’s a whole world out there, where your calendar and to-do list don’t mean shit and reality is better than even your wildest Netflix-soaked winter dreams could conjure up.

We’re kicking off this issue with a brand-new photography segment – Frames – the purpose of which is to showcase some of the hottest photography talent in Aotearoa while transporting you, mind-body-and-soul, to the far corners of the Motu. Our team has meticulously

curated each photo with maximum gratification for your face windows in mind.

Next up in the line-up is a salty how-to article from the illustrious and ubiquitous editor of New Zealand Fishing News, Nick Jones, that’ll take you from zero to 100 (fish) in no time.

For the ColorCote Tradie Profile, Nick Jones (told you he was ubiquitous) sits down with two brothers – Aaron and Sam Wood – to hear their inspiring story about how they’ve built their lives around their two passions: commercial cray-fishing and building.

Gastronomist and BBQ pundit Simon Walden (@thetradiebbq) again revs up our tastebuds and imaginations with a ridiculously delicious venison and mushroom meatball stroganoff recipe that’ll get your BBQ season started in style.

Lastly, South Island frother Johnny Ross takes us on a multi-day pilgrimage over the mountains from Wanaka to the West Coast – a place oozing with wilderness and mystique. Welcome to Offsite #34!

– Jason Harman

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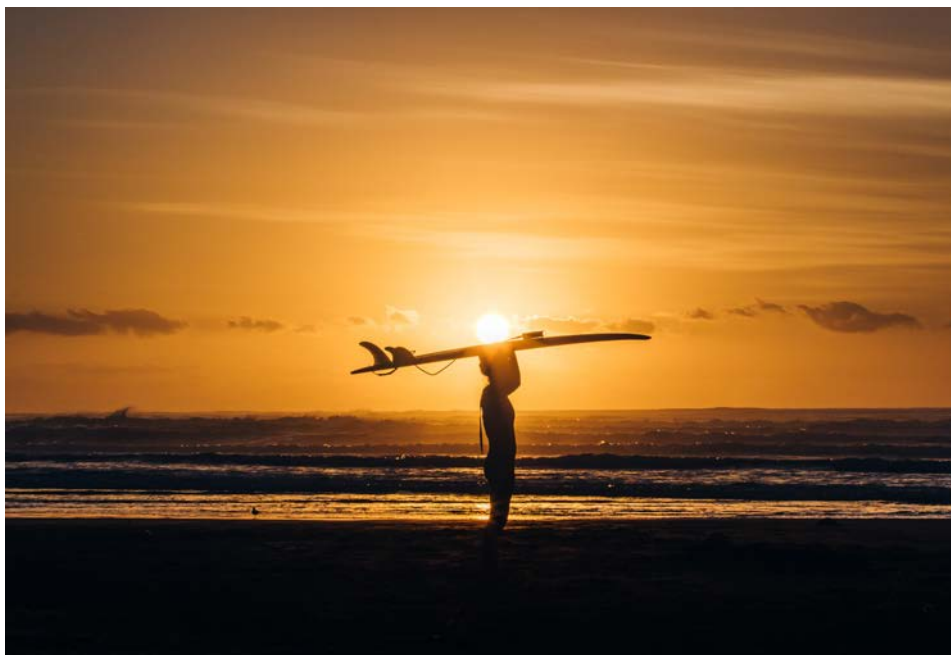


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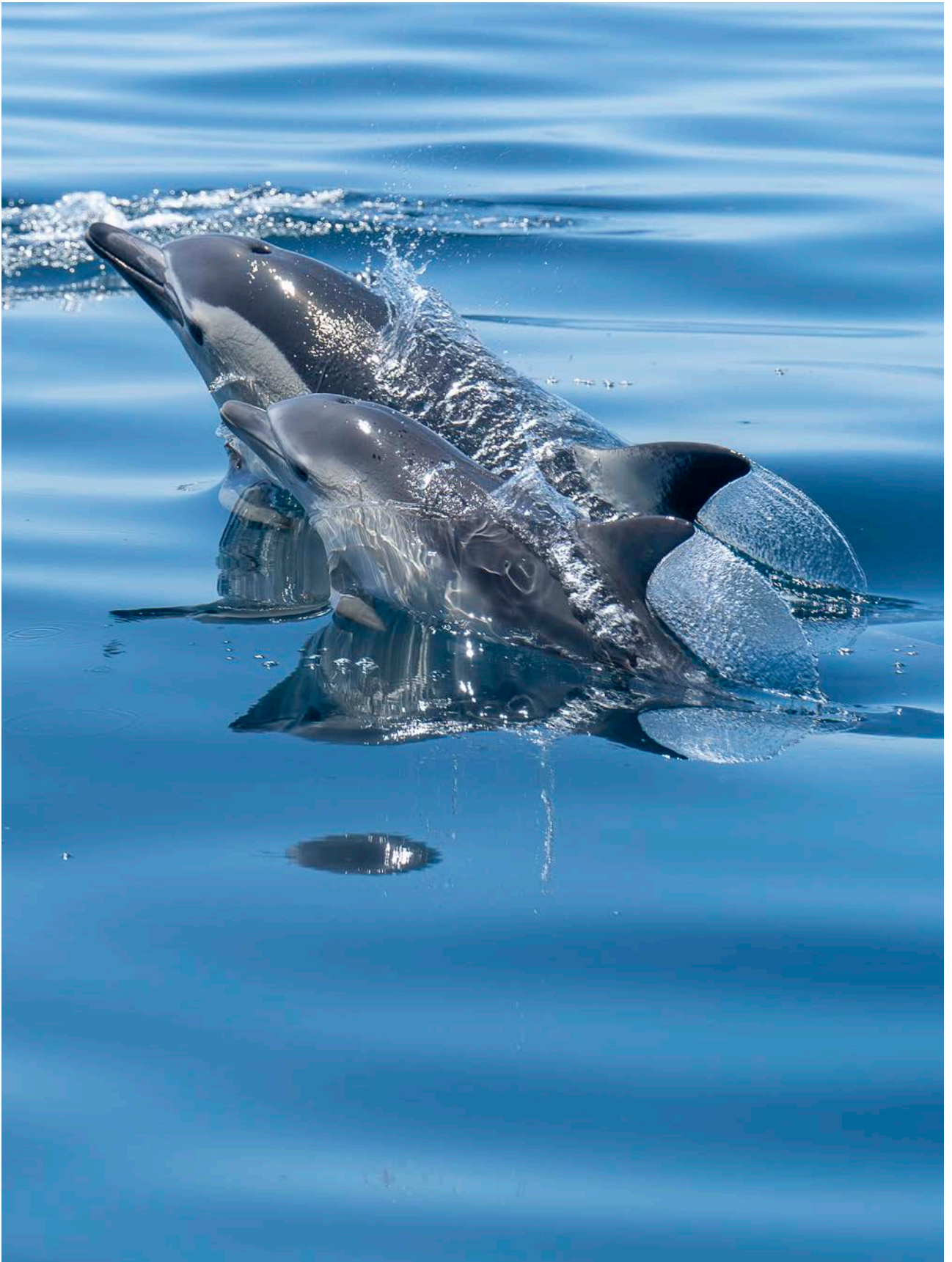
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FRAMES

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Salty Summer Fishing

By Nick Jones





It's that time of year when 'fair weather' anglers dust off the cobwebs and get ready to throw a cheeky line into the briny. Funnily enough, although the days are hot the fishing can often be the very opposite. Bearing this in mind, here are a few handy tricks that just might help you land that moocher you can brag about at the holiday campground.

Change of light

Dawn and dusk are my favourite times to drop a line, and it is widely regarded that fish feed hard as the sun is rising or going down. Sunrises and sunsets mean the 'changing of the guard' in terms of species and, consequently, the first or final chance for species to feed for the day or night – akin to humans' eating dinner or breakfast.

I do acknowledge that getting up at the crack of dawn may be difficult for some during the silly season. If you're too hungover to get up at sunrise, just aim for the evening session, my friend!

Fish like snapper can be notoriously tricky to tempt during the middle of the

day in summer; the fish are there, but they can be hard to catch. I'm unsure whether this is related to spawning activity (sex > food), the water being too warm to sustain extended feeding activity, or simply the longer days spreading feeding opportunities out over a longer period. Perhaps it is simply the fact that our boats, terminal tackle, and leaders become more obvious in the full light of day.

I find early morning and evening the best time to catch live-baits, be it from a wharf, boat, or the rocks. Also, predatory fish like kingies tend to use shallow light angles to their advantage, busting up hapless baitfish in the morning and evening.



Live-bait

Speaking of live-baits, they are normally well worth the effort! It's no surprise that predatory fish often want to eat the real deal. Mackerel schools are generally not too hard to find throughout summer; typical areas to start looking are over the sand in 10-25m depths or around inshore reefs and islands. Watch your sounder for mid-water schools or find some terns working the surface and drop down the sabikis.

When you find the bigger mackerel schools, there are often kingfish in attendance too, so have a live-bait set ready to go if you see some big slugs on the sounder or baits start getting plucked from your sabikis. If you're overnighting on the boat, you can catch jack mackerel at night from many anchorages around NZ.

As a rule of thumb when live-baiting for kingfish, slow-troll or drift over reefs under 20m deep, but sit on top of deeper pins with the engine in and out of reverse so you can drop mackerel straight down into good sign on the sounder.

The beauty of livies is that other desirable species enjoy gobbling them down too, so don't be surprised if your "just an undersized kingfish" materialises into a decent snapper or john dory at the boat!

Bite times

What the f@\$% is a 'bite time', you ask? Well, it's a mysterious thing based on the solunar calendar, which considers the moon's position relative to the earth. And although some might think it's some hippy garbage, many keen anglers without dreadlocks only go fishing according to these timings. There's also a fair amount of scientific evidence to back up the bite times theory (but I won't bore you with that). You can look them up online at www.fishing.net.nz/fishing-advice/bite-times/.

Smaller is sometimes better

Although 'big bait = big fish' is a worthwhile concept, you must remember that elephants eat peanuts too! When summer lure fishing, sometimes dropping down in size can make a big difference with finicky fish. Moving down to 3" soft-baits (I like the grub varieties as they have an enticing action on the drop) or micro-jigs can turn a slow fishing day around.





Current events

A key consideration some part-time anglers gloss over is planning your fishing trip according to what the tides and currents are doing. Fish will generally sit on the up-current side of reefs and structures and inshore fish like snapper often bite best when the current is flowing. Many spots will work better on either an incoming or outgoing tide, so it pays to experiment yourself or talk to a local guru.

Heading wide

Of course, summer is the peak time to head miles offshore to troll for large pelagic species like striped marlin and yellowfin tuna that ride the warm summer currents southwards to the NZ coast. It pays to spend a couple of evenings making sure all your gear and rigging are in tip-top shape before giving gamefishing a crack because large fish take no prisoners. But don't worry if you don't have fancy equipment, I caught my first marlin using surf rods lashed to the side of the

boat in lieu of outriggers – no worries for you DIYers!

The hot, calm summer days are also a great opportunity to find new deepwater reefs while trolling. Doing a few deep drops is also a great way to break up the monotony of a slow day towing plastics around the big blue, and you might bag a tasty critter like a hāpuku, bluenose, or bass.

No boat, no worries!

Many popular species become more prevalent closer to the shorelines and harbours around our great country during summer. Over the last few years of Covid lockdowns, I discovered that you can catch surprisingly good fish from the city shorelines. A lazy evening surfcast close to home is also a great way to earn some brownie points with the family whilst also wetting a line – bonus!

Good luck with your salty summer fishing adventures.



THE GREAT TRADIE FISH OFF 2023

WHAT: The Great Tradie Fish Off
WHERE: NZ-Wide
WHEN: 2nd-11th March 2023

PRIZEGIVING: 12th March 2023, venue TBA
HOW: Head to offsite.fishingcomp.co.nz to register
COST: FREE





Trade against trade, company against company, mate again mate – it's time to prove you're the best at what truly matters: catching fish.

The second-ever Great Tradie Fish Off is kicking off this March, and there is a lot to get excited about. You'll get a chance to win individual, company, and trade honours – and it's absolutely free to enter!

Thanks to our generous sponsors, there is a raft of great prizes to be won, along with a supersized trophy for the winning company (there'll be no confusion about who has bragging rights!).



HOW DOES THE COMP WORK?

When you sign up, you first register as an individual, then select or add your company, and finally choose your trade. Every fish you enter during the March competition dates will automatically be

allocated across those three categories. For the duration of the comp, you will be able to watch all three live leaderboards to keep up to date with how you, your trade, and your company are tracking.

This is a measure-only competition, so to enter a fish, you will need an approved measure mat – one of last year's Great Tradie Fish Off Measure Mats or another approved measure mat (a list of approved measure mats can be found at offsite.fishingcomp.co.nz). When you catch a fish you'd like to submit, simply line it up on the mat, take a pic, and enter it on the website. Each angler can submit one fish per

species per day, so choose wisely! You can then decide whether you keep the fish to feed your friends and whānau, or release it to swim another day – that's the beauty of measure-based comps.

You can also fish anywhere in the country, and we've included blue cod this

year for you tough southern tradies! There will be a prizegiving on the 12th of March in Auckland, but we will livestream the whole event, so those of you who are smart enough to live outside the Big Smoke can tune in too.

Go give the Offsite Instagram page (@offsite_magazine) a follow to stay up to date with the prizegiving details and how you can go about tuning in.

PRIZES

It may be a free competition, but that doesn't mean our sponsors have skimped on the prizes. ColorCote, Catch and Offsite's key sponsor Rheem have joined the party, making the total prize pool over \$10,000. Every prize will also include a custom competition Chums t-shirt, so there's no shortage of motivation for getting out on the water and hunting down a trophy.

There are prizes for the top five longest snapper, as well as average snapper, and top three prizes for kahawai, kingfish, and blue cod. The illustrious company trophy will be decided by the combined length across all three species, taking the top three fish of each species. The trade prize will be decided in the same way, except taking the top five lengths of each species.

If you and your company want to be a part of The Great Tradie Fish Off, simply head to offsite.fishingcomp.co.nz and register today. All you have to do is sign up to be in with a crack!



THE COLORCOTE TRADIE PROFILE


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Words and Images by Nick Jones

A loud diesel throb breaks the dawn tranquillity of Whitianga Harbour. I'm standing next to stacks of fish bins, brimming with odorous fish frames and barracouta heads. It's a drizzly, gloomy morning in the Eastern Coromandel, but it doesn't seem to have dampened the spirit of Aaron and Sam Wood as they swing into the wharf. We make our introductions and the jovial brothers welcome me onboard Wild West, a jet-powered Marlborough that has seen her fair share of days on the briny.

"Here mate, grab some of these," Aaron says as he offers me a pair of wax earplugs.

"Surely he's taking the piss," I think to myself, but when Sam pushes down the throttle upon clearing the harbour, I

understand it's no joke.

We head east towards Hahei, hugging the shoreline as we affably yell at each other, sharing stories about recent adventures. Beyond the Cathedral Cove marine reserve, I spy their first string of cray pots, made conspicuous by the industrial-sized buoys bobbing about on the surface.

Aaron and Sam fish commercially for crayfish in the CRA 2 fishery area that stretches from Te Arai north of Auckland down to East Cape. Crayfishing runs through multiple generations of the Wood family. Their grandfather and father both fished for crays, with the latter still making cray pots and getting out on the water to this day.

AARON & SAM WOOD



“We used to go out fishing with dad as little kids, playing on the roof of the boat and napping in the fish bins if it was a long day!”

logbook programme, tag and release projects, and sequences of intensive catch sampling to Ministry standards and specifications. On one of our first pots, we bring up a tagged cray, which is carefully measured before being released.

CRA 2 is also one of the few fisheries where the commercial sector has front-footed management measures, voluntarily reducing their catch in 2016 and 2017 to rebuild crayfish numbers. Undoubtedly, the significant proportion of intergenerational fishing families in CRA 2 has helped foster a perspective based on long-term sustainability.

After an hour, we head north

towards the Mercury Islands, Wild West tackling the moderate chop with ease. The company, the scenery, and the catch are all consistently good throughout the morning. Cray numbers appear to be healthy along both the coast and the islands – much better than in the early days of Aaron and Sam’s fishing, when catch limits were higher and there were more than half-a-dozen commercial cray boats working out from Whitianga.

“We have our patch and rotate through our fishing spots – essentially farming the area and never hammering one location,” Sam says.

I take mental notes of the productive shallower spots in case I return to the

“We used to go out fishing with dad as little kids, playing on the roof of the boat and napping in the fish bins if it was a long day!” Aaron says.

The rising sun and volcanic cliffs provide a picturesque background for the start of our fishing day. The lads rhythmically get into their work – Sam spinning the boat around on a dime while Aaron hauls the pots, sorts the catch, and launches rebaited pots back into the drink. Sam electronically logs the catch in real-time as they go.

“The CRA 2 fishery has one of the longest-running time series datasets in NZ,” says Sam.

In layperson’s terms, this means that CRA 2 is managed based on solid evidence regarding stock levels. The CRA 2 Rock Lobster Management Company Ltd. (CRAMAC 2) is the representative commercial stakeholder group for this region. CRAMAC 2 has made significant investments in rock lobster research since its formation in 1995, including a comprehensive vessel







I'm impressed by their work ethic, particularly Sam, who has four home-schooled kids!

“We have our patch and rotate through our fishing spots – essentially farming the area and never hammering one location.”

area with my freediving gear one day. I needn't bother, though, as the boys are not afraid to share a bit of their hard-earned intel: “This a great snorkelling spot to find a feed, Nick; they normally hold in pretty shallow along this ledge.”

We stop for a bite to eat in a sheltered cove on Stanley Island (Kawhitu), catch a couple of bronzed, kelp-coloured snapper on rod and reel, and chat about their tradie backgrounds. Like many crayfishers in NZ, they have a decent 'off-season',

which Aaron says they spend working on the land as builders.

“Both Sam and I are qualified chippies,” Aaron says. “Our most recent project was building mum's house.”

“We're looking at upgrading the Wild West to do more fishing – hopefully, with the increase in cray numbers, we will be able to catch a few more soon. But it's great to still be able to spend some time on the tools and mix it up a bit!”

I'm impressed by their work ethic,

particularly Sam, who has four home-schooled kids! Both lads have young boys, and although they have no intention of pushing their offspring into a crayfishing career, I'm sure they'll be more than happy to show their young fellas the ropes if requested.



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A Rotoroa Island Release



Jessica and Mark were stoked to be a part of the Rotoroa Island kiwi release.

Only a few hundred years ago, kiwi flooded our forests; now, our national bird is a rare sight in the wild. Only 68,000 kiwi remain in Aotearoa, and without our help, this number will only continue to decline. This is why Rheem partnered with Save the Kiwi, a non-profit organisation dedicated to saving our country's namesake from extinction.

As part of this partnership, Rheem staff are invited to kiwi release days, where young kiwi are relocated into safe areas until they are old enough to defend themselves from predators. Jessica Bensley was one of the Rheem team fortunate enough to attend one of these release days recently, and according to her, it was a “surreal experience”. On a typically windy

Auckland day, Jessica and Mark McCutcheon – Rheem’s General Manager – motored their way across the Hauraki Gulf to the small sanctuary of Rotoroa Island.

“The hosts were fantastic,” Jessica says. “They were really knowledgeable and super friendly. The whole experience was just amazing. The boat ride over was a bit choppy, so it wasn’t

Jessica walking through the forest towards one of the release spots.



The kiwi were carefully placed in wooden “burrows” and left to make their own way out when they were ready.

the most idyllic circumstance, but once we get there, Rotoroa Island is just beautiful. It’s just a lovely little island.

“I’ve not had the chance to go on a kiwi release trip and it was really exciting,” Jessica continued. “There was only meant to be one kiwi released, but there ended up being three – it was awesome and they were ranging in age from really, really young to a bit older.”

After arriving on the island, the team made the 15-minute walk up the hill to the first release spot. They soon found the wooden burrow, where the first of the chicks was placed. After everyone leaves, Jessica confirmed, the baby kiwi will make its own way out through the straw-laden box and into the wild.

“You never get to see kiwis up close... and to see little tiny ones and so vulnerable, it was quite a unique experience,” Jessica says.

“We were accompanied by a beautiful couple and their daughter and they did a little karakia for the third release... it was really sweet. There was

an advocate from Save the Kiwi as well, and two Zoo keepers from Auckland zoo.. and it was all of our first times doing a release so we all shared the experience as fresh newbies – it was awesome.”

For Jessica, witnessing Save the Kiwi’s important work first-hand provided a fresh perspective of Rheem’s involvement with the organisation.

“I think just learning more about where our sponsorship going is just amazing... You can sponsor something and you can know about it, but to really go through the process and see what they do is a whole new level of experience.”

Rheem has supported Save the Kiwi for over three years now, and couldn’t be more proud of the work they’re doing throughout the country. If you’d like to find out more about Save the Kiwi and see how you could support their efforts to save our national bird, head to www.savethekiwi.nz/donate.



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.

VENISON MEATBALLS & MUSHROOM STROGANOFF

Recipe by Simon Walden



Juicy venison meatballs are a winning alternative to traditional beef meatballs in this creamy stroganoff. Hearty and rich; this is comfort food at its best.

METHOD

THE MEAT BALLS

Sauté the onion and garlic in 1 tbsp of oil until softened. Cool for 10 mins, then tip into a big bowl with the finely chopped parsley, 1 tbsp of the wholegrain mustard, venison mince, breadcrumbs, and egg. Season with salt and pepper.

Mix together with your hands, squeezing the mince well to tenderise it as you mix. In your hands, roll the meat mixture into meatballs. Roughly 65g each or around the size of golf balls.

Heat the remaining oil in a large frying pan and fry the meatballs in small batches, moving around until evenly browned all over. Add a splash more oil if needed towards the end.

Scoop out and set the meatballs aside in a dish.

THE SAUCE

Over a high heat, add the butter to the pan and fry the sliced mushrooms until golden. Lower the heat and stir in the paprika and flour, cooking for 1 minute.

Stir in the stock and whisky, and bring to a simmer, scraping up any bits stuck in the pan.

Bring to the boil until the sauce starts to thicken, then stir in the remaining 1 tbsp wholegrain mustard, the Dijon mustard, tomato purée and sour cream.

Bring the sauce back to a simmer. Add the meatballs and any juice back to the pan and simmer gently.

While your meatballs are simmering, get on with the pasta (alternatively, you could serve it with rice or mashed potato). Add your pasta to a pot of salted boiling water and cook until 'al dente'.

Season the stroganoff to taste, then top with the remaining parsley.

Ingredients

Serves 4

- 1x onion, finely chopped
- 2x garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Italian parsley roughly chopped + 1 tbsp finely chopped
- 2 tbsp wholegrain mustard
- 400g venison mince
- 100g fresh white bread-crumbs
- 1x egg, beaten
- 25g butter
- 400g mushrooms, larger ones sliced
- ½ tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tbsp plain flour
- 400g beef stock
- 150ml whiskey
- 2 tsp dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp tomato purée
- 300ml pot soured cream
- 250g dried or fresh pasta





HEADED WEST

Words and images
by Johnny Ross

I It was a classic spring scorchers of a day in Wanaka. I was working away on the building site when texts started flowing about an early knock-off to partake in some slushy laps up at Treble Cone. But the forecast for the West Coast was hard to ignore – zero wind and blue skies all weekend. With the bonus long weekend due to the Queen’s unfortunate passing, an early knock-off was still imminent, but we opted to load all the camping gear into Aubrey, my 1978 ‘liteweight’ caravan, and head west to Haast.

Zero Plans

The beauty of living in Wanaka is that the ‘wild west’ is only a 1.5-hour drive away – we even managed to get there in time for a couple of sunset

beers on Haast beach.

If you’ve ever spent time in Haast township you’ll appreciate that it feels like you’ve stepped back in time, to circa 1990, when phone reception was patchy and the sandflies were extra-hungry for human meat. Despite this, there are still plenty of good reasons to head there (it is in the centre of a world heritage area after all).

The sea was messy that day, so the idea of fishing or surfing was put to bed. Instead, we decided to sneak down to Jackson’s Bay for some bush walks. The three of us set up the rooftop tent and caravan, cooked a BBQ dinner, and played a few card games. With the caravan hooked to the truck and a rooftop tent, the setup can sleep six people with no problems – it’s such an easy way of camping.



Foot Falcons

Waking up in the caravan is always confusing. It's not until you pull the curtains that you remember exactly where you parked the day before. After a coffee and some bagels to kickstart the day, we hit the road south as far as it would take us.

Jackson's Bay is about 30 minutes south of Haast, a sheltered Northwest-facing bay that's popular with tourists and fishermen alike. If the sea is flat, it's an excellent boat-access gateway to the shallow bays further south (where healthy fish and crayfish populations still thrive). But on this occasion, we were there to check out the bush walks in the area, in particular: the track heading to Smoothwater Point.

The track started as a steep slog up the bank but eventually mellowed out to a beautiful native forest, with plenty of birdlife and gorgeous rivers to feast our

eyes on. After an hour of walking, we emerged out of the trees and stepped onto one of the most unreal beaches any of us had ever seen. Many people carry surfboards through the bush, or spearfishing equipment – the waves are uncrowded, and the sea is teeming with crayfish and pua. We chatted with another group who were headed further around the rocks at low tide, to Stafford hut, where they were planning to hunt red deer along the river flats.

After a few hours of taking in the sights, we headed back along the winding track, surrounded by lush green bush. On the way home, we passed a group who had flown in by helicopter and were whitebaiting in a slow-moving pool on the river. All the locals we met were friendly and keen for a yarn. It's hard to beat the West Coast on a bluebird day!





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Be prepared for a bar-leaning story or two – about how many trophy deer are around the township, or the greatest whitebait catch ever.

West is Best

On the way back to Haast, we stopped in to check out Hannah's Clearing and enjoy the last of the late afternoon sun. We witnessed the most insane West Coast sunset over a few beach games, but then the sandflies let us know it was dinner time. Once we got back to Haast, the Hard Antler Pub became the number one choice for dinner as they were playing the All Blacks vs. Aussie game. We had some more mates from Wanaka join us at the camp spot, so we all parked up for the night and wandered down to the bar.

Walking into the Hard Antler can be intimidating at first – with a packed

bar of local 'west coasters', it feels like every eye is on you. But, as soon as you settle in, people want to know what brought you to their favourite place. Be prepared for a bar-leaning story or two – about how many trophy deer are around the township, or the greatest whitebait catch ever. The stories get taller as the beers flow from the wooden bar. To add to the ambience, the dated interior of the pub is completely covered in massive deer antlers from the area. Make sure you order the famous whitebait patties, they're worth writing home about. After a great win from the lads in black, we eventually stumbled our way back to camp.

Spring Laps

With the West Coast cup now full to the brim, it was time to get back home to get some skiing in to round out the weekend. After a scenic drive through the Haast Pass, we waved the sandflies and West Coast scenes goodbye. Being up the mountain by midday, we were feeling incredibly grateful to live in a place where so many opportunities are possible within a single day. We spent the public holiday enjoying some of the Queen's favourite things: indulging in scones, gin, and of course – cake. Until next time!





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