

the life.



PRUE RUSCOE

FANTASY ISLAND
The sun sets over
Kokomo Private
Island—Fiji's
must-visit luxury
wellness destination



traced elements

LOOKING FOR RELAXATION AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO FOCUS ON SELF-CARE?
WE DISCOVER A PRIVATE ISLAND IN FIJI THAT DELIVERS ALL (INCLUDING GREAT COFFEE)

by **AMBER MACKAY** photographed by **PRUE RUSCOE**



The Dravunluxury residence has four bedrooms and stunning views



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A one-bedroom villa's master bedroom looks over the private pool; the view from the pool deck across the ocean; Kokomo's executive chef Cory Campbell and naturopath Kim Campbell, who wear san Aje top and Yoli & Otis pants; and casual bar and restaurant Walker d'Plank.



As the sun begins to fade and the sky slowly changes to reveal the apricot tones of sunset, our private charter seaplane executes the gentlest of ocean landings. When we disembark on the pier, a pristine beachscape stretches before us, framed by palm trees and the thatched bure-style buildings of Kokomo Private Island, Fiji. An official welcome to the island comes via the harmonic voices of a 20-strong choir greeting our arrival.

Kokomo Island was originally built to be used by Australian property developer Lang Walker and his family for their private holidays. Its doors opened to the public two years ago, offering 21 seafront villas all with private pools, and five residences, the largest with six bedrooms. For those wanting to do more than just relax, the resort boasts three restaurants, a tennis court, kids' club and a range of activities including paddleboarding, diving, sailing plus access to the two neighbouring islands. Its reputation as a luxury intergenerational holiday destination continues to evolve, with a focus on wellness and sustainability being spearheaded by two new arrivals.

A little over two months ago, executive chef Cory and Kim Campell arrived on the island with big plans, plenty of innovative ideas and their 18-month-old son, Aiden, in tow.

Cory, 39, grew up in Newcastle, NSW, and worked as an apprentice chef before heading to Copenhagen to begin his career at Noma restaurant. "It opened my eyes to what we can do in regards to seasonality, looking at food in a different way, being creative, but also staying true to its flavour."

A decision to return to his homeland was just as professionally and personally fulfilling. "I was looking to bring some of that Noma inspiration, to see what we could do in Australia." When approached by chef Shannon Bennett to relaunch Melbourne's fine-dining venue Vue de Monde, they found a common thread in their approach and shared query: what is



Australian food?" "Shannon let me off the leash," Cory says. "It was all my food and I had a great, great experience. Australian cuisine is now really creating its own identity and there are so many people on board. It was good to be at the start of it."

Cory met New Zealander Kim while working with Bennett, bonding over a mutual love of wild ingredients. Kim, studying to be a naturopath at the time, joined Cory on his foraging adventures.

Looking for a new experience and considering a move overseas, an initial offer of a role for Cory at Kokomo was extended to include Kim, with a newly created position of health practitioner.

On being asked if her work has influenced her husband, Kim is candid. "I think we complement each other really well. I'm more focused on the health of something, [which] may not necessarily be the tastiest. Cory helps me adjust it



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Kim, in a dress by Matteau, takes a break between appointments; start the morning with Cory's Fijian inspired breakfast bowl (recipe p134); the spa's covered outdoor relaxation area; and a hammock hangs between palm trees at the front of a two-bedroom beachside villa



SUPERFOODS FOR BETTER HEALTH

KIM USES THESE TROPICAL INGREDIENTS TO COAX THE BODY TO BETTER HEALTH. DO TRY THIS AT HOME!

1. LOCAL HONEY

Honey is antibacterial and antimicrobial. When eaten, it's also a prebiotic that feeds the healthy gut bacteria, which is important for mood, digestion, prevention of food intolerances and having a strong immune function. Eating local honey provides us with minute amounts of surrounding pollen to help build resistance to hayfever and reduce symptoms for those who suffer from it.

2. NONI FRUIT

Noni (from *Morinda citrifolia*, a small, tropical, evergreen tree, available at speciality stores) is great for short-term use if you are feeling sluggish. If you overindulged on a holiday or had a little too much to drink, it also helps the liver. For detoxification, just have a noni shot.

3. SEAWEED PEARLS

These delightful little bursts of the sea (known as vegan caviar, available at Ikea) are a nutritionally dense way to season a meal. Packed with protein, vitamins and minerals, plus nutrients such as iodine and tyrosine, seaweed pearls improve thyroid function and metabolism while supporting healthy detoxification and weight loss. They also contain antioxidants and essential fatty acids to reduce inflammation.

4. GREEN PAPAYA

The seeds can be dried and ground into a powder and used to tenderise meats due to the powerful enzyme papain. The fleshy fruit is a rich source of vitamins A and C, and carotenoids for healthy immune function, skin healing and eyes.

[because] he has more of a idea about the flavour profile to make it palatable.”

Given the challenges of creating high-quality dishes on a remote island eight hours boat ride from the mainland, Cory’s focus was on using as much locally grown produce as possible, only including fresh fish caught locally and fresh chicken eggs. He’s since instituted a six-month program to increase the production of fresh fruit and vegetable grown across the two hectares of gardens. The garden plays an equally important role in Kim’s work, too. “The brassica vegetables [family of plants that include broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage] that we have growing here are really good at helping the liver, reducing cholesterol and reducing any excess hormones. So if anyone is suffering from PMS or hormonal acne or anything associated with reproduction, then I’ll prescribe a bowl of brassica vegetables when they are ordering dinner.”

The resort offers a bespoke wellness program to cater to the needs of each client, with a range of professionals to support your journey. Kim’s naturopathy is complemented by a meditation and yoga coach, therapists at Yaukuve Spa Sanctuary, plus visiting practitioners’ specialities like acupuncture and rolfing.

On the afternoon of our departure, Cory insists on introducing me to the island’s head barista, Leba Venivula, who has just been named Fiji’s best barista after travelling internationally, including to Australia, to train and compete. With Cory’s focus on quality, it’s important the island delivers coffee to match its food. The coffee is extremely consistent (10 long blacks over three days, all excellent), proving that you don’t have to sacrifice what you love in the pursuit of wellness.

WHEN TO VISIT May to October to avoid the humidity and cyclone season. Kokomo Private Island Fiji, from approx. \$3,700 per night (plus taxes) including meals, non-alcoholic beverages, 45-minute spa treatment, introductory dive and all laundry and pressing services. For families, the resort also offers a complimentary kids club and nanny services. Transfer from Nadi International airport—a 45-minute charter seaplane or helicopter flight, approx. \$1,035 per adult/\$520 per child (plus taxes); kokomoislandfiji.com. Virgin Australia offers 19 return Fiji flights between Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane each week. All-inclusive fares start at \$700; virginaustralia.com.au



The open-plan living and dining area in one of the island’s private residences

WELLNESS TIPS NEED A RECHARGE, BUT ESCAPING TO A TROPICAL ISLAND’S NOT AN OPTION? KIM SHARES FOUR SIMPLE TIPS FOR IMPROVING HEALTH AT HOME



Salt exfoliation massage

“Not only does this get rid of dead skin cells, but it’s great for supporting lymphatic circulation, which governs your immune system. It’s great for when you have cold hands or feet, or just poor circulation.”

Coconut water “This is good for anyone with food intolerances or digestive complaints. I’d suggest coconut water in a smoothie instead of milk, or coconut water and lime, just to get your digestive system going.”

Foot bath “Get yourself some Epsom salts to relax your feet in, because they are a great source of magnesium. Dissolve them into a lukewarm foot bath, then soak your feet there while you relax. If you don’t have Epsom salts, try using sea salt. That will still draw out a lot of the inflammation and swelling in your feet.”

Yoga “Try to include some yoga into your weekly routine. It’s great for circulation, for your overall health and for mindfulness.”

THE DRINKS

NONI, LEMON GINGER SHOT

Serves two 30ml shots

INGREDIENTS:

1 fresh, ripe noni fruit
1 wild bush lemon
1cm-thick fresh ginger slice

1 Chop the noni fruit into bite-sized chunks. **2** Slice the peel from the lemon and cut into quarters. **3** Chop the ginger into three pieces. **4** Use a cold-press machine to extract nutrient- and enzyme-dense juice. **5** Pour contents into two 30ml glasses and enjoy.

TIP: If you don't have a cold-press machine, a regular juicer will suffice.

GREEN PAPAYA JUICE

Serves two 250ml glasses

INGREDIENTS:

½ green papaya
2 small lemons
½ large cucumber
5 x 10cm-length parsley sprigs
3 stalks of celery with leaves

1 Slice the peel away from the papaya and remove the seeds. **2** Slice the peel away from the lemon. **3** Wash remaining ingredients. **4** Chop papaya, lemon and cucumber into bite-sized pieces. **5** Add all ingredients into a cold-press machine to extract nutrient and enzyme-dense juice. **6** Pour contents into two glasses and drink any time for a quick, nutritional pick-me-up. (Can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 48 hours, but best consumed within 12 hours.)

TIP: Keep the papaya seeds for drying and use as papaya pepper. Or grind into a powder to use as a skin-rejuvenating exfoliator or mask.



A noni, lemon and ginger shot, and a green papaya juice, here served on a Dinosaur Designs tray

THE RECIPES

Cory's healthy approach focuses on local fresh ingredients

BREAKFAST BOWL

Serves 4

160g Spanish mackerel
sea salt
50g coconut sugar
2 large avocados
1 ¼ lime
16 green beans
1 tsp mild chilli paste
white vinegar
4 poached eggs
160g cooked wild black rice
8 large lettuce leaves
16 sea grape sprigs
12 bougainvillea flowers
12 sprigs of mint
12 sprigs of dill

FOR CURED FISH 1 Place the fish into a small tray. 2 In a bowl, mix the sea salt and sugar together then sprinkle over the fish. 3 Place the fish in the refrigerator for 24 hours, turning the fish over 2-3 times to ensure curing is even throughout. 4 Remove fish from liquid and keep aside. **FOR SMASHED AVOCADO** 1 Scoop out the avocados into a bowl. 2 Using a fork, crush the avocado into a chunky puree texture. 3 Use a fine grater for ¼ teaspoon of zest from lime peel. 4 Squeeze 3-4 drops until desired taste of lime juice. 5 Season with sea salt. **FOR SPICED GREEN BEANS** 1 Use the sea salt to season boiling water and quickly blanch the green beans for 2-3 minutes. 2 Remove from heat, strain and dry green beans. 3 Fold through chilli paste to combine. **FOR POACHED EGGS** 1 Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil. 2 Add 20mls of white vinegar to the water. 3 With a large spoon, create a vortex by stirring. 4 Crack the eggs into the water and allow to cook for 2-3 mins. **TO ASSEMBLE** 1 Slice the cured fish and

arrange in a bowl with the rice, lettuce, green beans and avocado. 2 When the eggs are ready, gently lift out of the water, drain excess liquid and position over the ingredients arranged in the bowl. 3 Top with the remaining herbs and flowers, season to taste and serve.

FLAME TAIL SNAPPER AND BRASSICA VEGETABLES

Serves 4

90g honey
110g vinegar
water
16 chopped raisins
1 tsp chopped parsley
4 tsp roasted pine nuts
olive oil
16 broccolini crudité
12 pickled broccoli
20 young broccoli leaves
360g snapper fillet
16 crisp capers (capers in vinegar)
sea salt
20 pickled mint leaves
20 cabbage flowers

FOR PICKLE LIQUOR 1 Bring honey, vinegar and water to the boil, and leave to cool. 2 Store in the refrigerator for later use. **FOR THE GREMOLATA** 1 Take the raisins, parsley and pine nuts and mix together. 2 Add a dash of oil to moisten the mixture. **FOR THE BRASSICA VEGETABLES** 1 Finely slice the broccolini on a mandolin, place in a bowl of ice water for 20 mins to curl up, take out and dry on a paper towel. Repeat with the broccoli. 2 Take some of the thinly shaved broccoli and place in the cold pickle liquor. 3 With the offcuts from the broccolini and broccoli, cook in seasoned water until very tender; strain (keeping some cooking water) and blend until smooth, adding a little cooking water to help blend if needed. Season and store in a container. **FOR THE SNAPPER** 1 Cut the fish into 30g pieces. 2 Leave to come up to room temperature. **FOR THE CRISP CAPERS** 1 Heat a pan with a little oil and add the dried capers

to the pan and keep on moving the pan over a medium-high heat until the capers start to crisp up. 2 Remove from the pan and place onto absorbent paper. Season with a little salt. **TO ASSEMBLE** 1 Strain the broccoli from the pickle liquor. 2 Heat a heavy-based pan over a medium heat. 3 Add a little oil to the pan. 4 Place the fish into the pan and gently cook, adjusting the heat if needed. (You want the fish to cook slowly.) Turn the fish over and leave until just underdone. 5 Remove the fish from the pan and place onto a warm tray. Arrange the warm plates and the rest of the ingredients in close proximity. 6 Flake the fish around the plates. 7 Spoon some broccoli puree around the fish. 8 Spoon over the pine nut and raisin gremolata. 9 Place a few pickled broccoli around. 10 Dress the plate with the rest of the ingredients, season with a sprinkle of salt and serve.

ROASTED DUCK BREAST WITH FLATBREAD

Serves 4

2 duck breasts
Kokomo honey
sea salt
80g soft goat's cheese
1 mandarin segment
yellow edible flowers
FOR FLATBREAD
400g milk
11g instant yeast
6g sugar
300g baker's flour
3.5g bicarb soda
8g sea salt flakes

Ask your butcher if they can provide you with a dry-aged duck. For this recipe we only used the breast, remove the legs but keep the breasts on—this is called the crown. 1 Preheat the oven to 200°C. 2 Brush the honey over the duck, season with sea salt and place on a rack in the oven. 3 Cook for 8 mins, turn over and cook for a further 8 mins, then leave to cool. **FOR FLATBREAD** 1 Warm the milk to about 40°C, add the yeast and sugar and stir. Sift the flour and add the other ingredients to combine. 2 Add the yeast milk to the flour and mix until smooth. 3 Leave to rest for 30 mins. 4 Just before serving, heat a non-stick pan and wipe with an oiled paper towel. 5 Spoon a tablespoon amount of the flatbread mix into the pan; continue a few more times. 6 Cook on one side until golden, then flip over and repeat until done. They should have a nice spring to them when done. **TO ASSEMBLE** 1 Place the goat's cheese into a small condiment bowl. 2 Spoon some honey into another condiment bowl. 3 Chop the mandarin segments and place into a bowl and top with the flowers. 4 Carve the duck breasts and slice thinly. 5 Place the duck on the warm flatbread, top with the goat's cheese and mandarin, and drizzle with honey.



Flame tail snapper and brassica vegetables



Roasted duck breast with flatbread