

OF LAND & SEA

TWO SCOTTISH CHEFS WITH CLASSIC FRENCH TRAINING ARE MAKING THEIR MARK ON THE TASMANIAN FOOD SCENE AT OIRTHIR.

WORDS RACHEL WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY ADAM GIBSON



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT "It's a good conversation starter," says Bob of the restaurant's unusual name; Oirthir overlooks Maria Island and Marion Bay; elegant simplicity; Scottish Harris tweed meets coastal ephemera. **FACING PAGE** Husband-and-wife duo and Oirthir owners Bob Piechniczek and Jillian McInnes.



“THE PRODUCE IN TASMANIA is an absolute chef’s dream,” says Bob Piechniczek, chef and co-director of Tasmania’s newest destination fine-diner, Oirthir, located at Bream Creek, just a 45-minute drive east of Hobart. “There’s so much available and the quality is outstanding – it was a major drawcard.”

Co-director and pastry chef Jillian McInnes is equally effusive. “The things coming out of Tasmania now are very impressive; quite inspiring,” she says.

Originally from Scotland, the husband-and-wife duo met while honing their craft in kitchens around Edinburgh. Seeking adventure, they spent a few years in New Zealand before settling in Melbourne in 2017. Seven years later, they were ready for a new career challenge.

“We came to Tassie on our honeymoon in 2019 and just loved it,” explains Jillian. “We kept coming back for five years in a row, then this opportunity came up and we jumped at it; we were ready to do our own thing.”

The opportunity that presented itself was the chance to buy Timothy Hardy and Laura Ducken’s Van Bone, which closed in 2024. “They built this restaurant from the ground up,” says Bob. “Laura is an architect, so the lighting in this restaurant is pretty incredible; it’s really well designed.”

The former owners were looking for buyers with a similar approach to low-impact dining and seasonal eating. “They wanted someone to keep their story and philosophy going,” adds Jillian. “So, we came in with respect for what they’d done, but also with the chance to build our own dream.”

Building a strong connection with the previous owners helped Bob and Jillian feel confident taking the plunge, and they opened their doors for business in February

this year. The name for their new venture took inspiration from their past and present. “We really wanted to use our heritage, and the Gaelic word Oirthir – pronounced ‘or-heer’ – meaning ‘coast’, just kind of fell in there,” says Jillian.

Attracted to Tasmania’s rugged terrain and its familiar seasonal weather patterns, Bob and Jillian were also impressed by the fresh produce from local businesses, including, “dairy, cheese, lamb, beef, seafood, wine and whisky – all [sourced] within 30 to 40 kilometres of the restaurant – which have played an important part on our menu,” says Bob.

Combining the techniques of their classical French training, flavours of their Scottish heritage and abundant local produce has resulted in a menu so specific to Bob and Jillian, and their immediate surroundings, that it wouldn’t make sense anywhere but Bream Creek. “If we were to do this somewhere else, even in Hobart, I don’t think it would really work,” says Jillian.

Following a successful first six months, Bob says he and Jillian plan to continue as they’ve started: creating simple dishes that champion the natural bounty of Tasmania’s land and sea. “We’ve always said we’d stay humble and true to ourselves. We just want to make good food for good people,” says Bob. “If accolades come, that’s absolutely fantastic, but our plan is to stick to what we believe in, and we’ve had a great start so far.”
Visit oirthir.com or follow @oirthir_restaurant on Instagram. >



CULLEN SKINK



From its paddock perch, Oirthir offers views of Maria Island. **FACING PAGE** A classic Scottish favourite, cullen skink combines delicious haddock, potatoes and onions.

FOOD *Bream Creek Tas*

CULLEN SKINK

Cullen skink is a traditional Scottish soup using smoked haddock, potatoes and onions. The soup is a specialty from the town Cullen in Moray on the north-east coast of Scotland. This is our version...

Serves 4

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| 300ml whole milk | 1 leek, finely chopped |
| 300ml thickened cream | 3 medium potatoes, peeled and diced |
| 300ml fish stock | Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste |
| 400g smoked haddock fillets or cod, or any smoked white fish, skin removed | Fresh parsley or chives, chopped, for garnish |
| 2 tablespoons butter | |
| 1 large onion, finely chopped | |

In a large pan, combine the milk, thickened cream and fish stock. Gently heat until almost simmering, then add the smoked haddock fillets. Poach on low heat for 8-10 minutes until the fish is cooked through and opaque. Remove the fish and set aside, keeping the liquid in the pan.

In another pot, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the onion and leek; cook gently for 5 minutes, until soft and translucent. Add the diced potatoes and stir for a minute.

Pour the poaching liquid through a sieve into the pot with the onions and potatoes. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook until the potatoes are tender – about 15 minutes.

While the potatoes cook, flake the haddock into bite-sized pieces, removing any skin and bones. Once the potatoes are soft, add the haddock to the pot. Season with salt and black pepper, then let everything warm through for a few minutes.

To serve, ladle the soup into bowls and garnish with parsley or chives.

GAMEKEEPER'S PIE SERVED WITH CLAPSHOT

Gamekeeper's pie celebrates the start of the game season, known as the Glorious Twelfth (August 12) in the UK. It is the first shoot of the season, when game is at its peak.

Serves 4-6

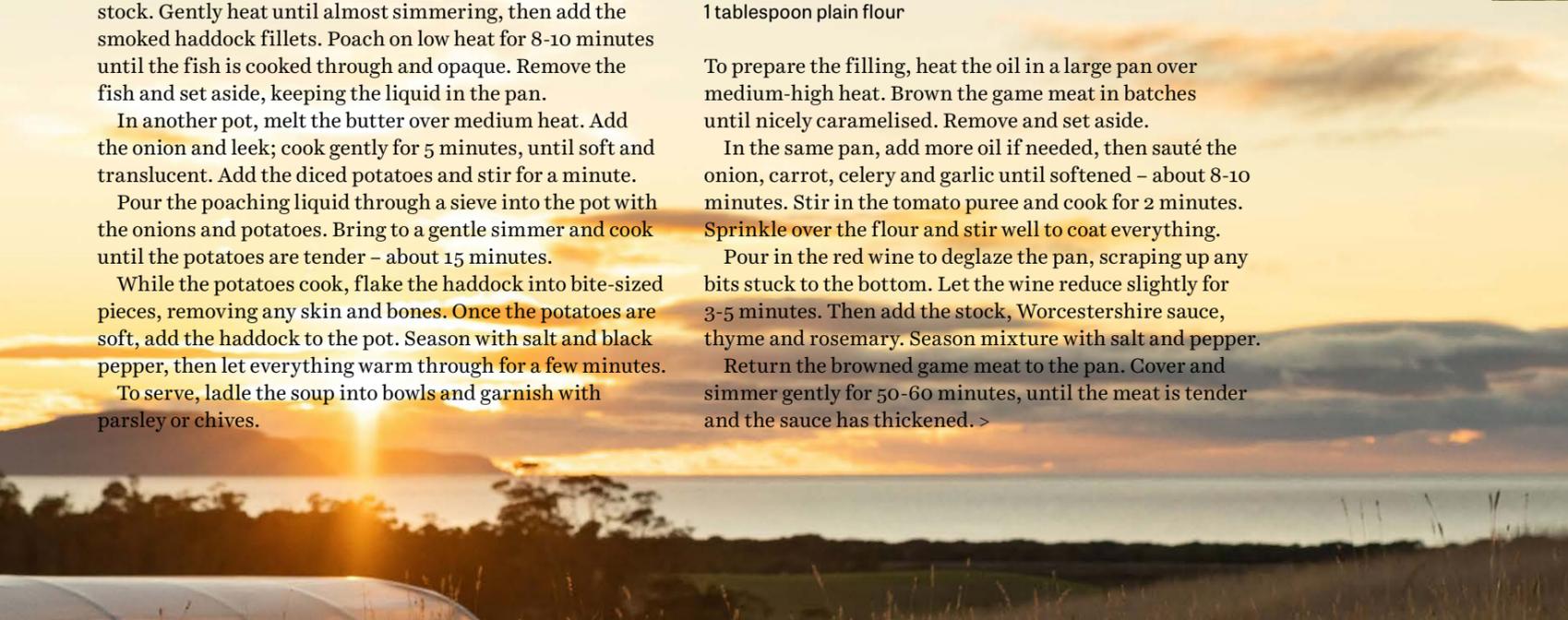
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| FILLING | 150ml red wine |
| 1 tablespoon vegetable oil | 300ml beef or game stock |
| 500g mixed game meat (venison, kangaroo, wallaby shank), trimmed and diced | 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce |
| 1 onion, finely chopped | 4 sprigs thyme |
| 2 carrots, diced | 2 sprigs rosemary |
| 2 celery sticks, diced | Salt and black pepper, to taste |
| 2 garlic cloves, minced | TOPPING |
| 2 tablespoons tomato puree | 1 sheet all butter puff pastry |
| 1 tablespoon plain flour | 1 egg yolk |

To prepare the filling, heat the oil in a large pan over medium-high heat. Brown the game meat in batches until nicely caramelised. Remove and set aside.

In the same pan, add more oil if needed, then sauté the onion, carrot, celery and garlic until softened – about 8-10 minutes. Stir in the tomato puree and cook for 2 minutes. Sprinkle over the flour and stir well to coat everything.

Pour in the red wine to deglaze the pan, scraping up any bits stuck to the bottom. Let the wine reduce slightly for 3-5 minutes. Then add the stock, Worcestershire sauce, thyme and rosemary. Season mixture with salt and pepper.

Return the browned game meat to the pan. Cover and simmer gently for 50-60 minutes, until the meat is tender and the sauce has thickened. >



"Something we were trained in specifically at home was seasonality and supporting local suppliers, which we're very proud of," says Bob. **FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP** Garden-fresh herbs for garnishing; stylish simplicity; the greenhouse holds beetroot, watercress, spinach, strawberries, chives, tarragon and warrigal greens; natural beauty surrounds the venue; time to indulge; Oirthir's rustic exterior complements the landscape; dining with a view.



FOOD *Bream Creek Tas*

To assemble the pie, transfer the game filling into a large ovenproof dish, placing the cooked wallaby shank in the centre. Allow to cool for 10 minutes.

Next, cut a small hole in the centre of the puff pastry and place it on top of the pie, over the wallaby shank. Glaze the top of the pie with the egg yolk and score the pastry.

Preheat oven to 200°C. Cook the pie for 15-20 minutes, until the pastry is golden and crispy. Allow the pie to rest for 5 minutes before slicing and serving.

CLAPSHOT

Typically served with haggis or oatcakes, clapsnot originates from Orkney. This version was a particular favourite of Jillian's when cooked by her father, William.

Serves 4-6

1 large turnip, peeled and diced	Salt and black pepper
5 medium-size carrots, peeled and diced	25g toasted oatmeal
25g butter	Chopped chives, for garnish

Place diced turnip, carrot and butter in an ovenproof dish and add a splash of water; mix gently. Cover the dish with foil and bake at 180°C for 40-50 minutes, until tender.

Lightly mash the clapsnot and adjust the seasoning to taste. Spoon onto a serving plate and top with the toasted oatmeal and chives.

CRANACHAN TART WITH WHISKY HONEY CUSTARD

Cranachan is a traditional Scottish dessert, made following the raspberry harvest in August. It combines whipped cream, raspberries, whisky, honey and toasted oats. This is our version in a tart form.

Serves 8-10

PASTRY	100g caster sugar
200g plain flour	Zest of 1 lemon
100g oat flour	165g cold unsalted butter, cubed
50g rolled oats	2 whole eggs

RASPBERRY JAM

250g raspberries
225g caster sugar
10ml lemon juice

FRANGIPANE FILLING

125g unsalted butter, softened
Zest of 1 lemon
125g caster sugar
2 eggs
125g almond meal
40g oat flour

30g rolled oats

Pinch of salt

TOPPING

150-200g fresh raspberries
20g rolled oats, toasted
30g flaked almonds, toasted

WHISKY GLAZE

2 tablespoons apricot jam, warmed and strained (for brushing)
1 tablespoon whisky

To make the pastry, add all the dry pastry ingredients to a stand-up mixer, along with the butter, and paddle until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs.

Next, add the eggs and mix until the dough is formed. Wrap the dough in cling film and place it in the fridge to chill for at least 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 170°C. Roll out the chilled pastry on a lightly floured surface to fit a 23cm tart tin. Line the tin with the pastry, trim the edges, and chill it again for 10 minutes.

Next, line the pastry with parchment paper and fill with baking beans or rice. Bake for 20 minutes, then remove the paper and beans, and bake the pastry for a further 10 minutes until lightly golden. Remove from the oven.

To make the raspberry jam, combine the raspberries and sugar in a pot. Cook gently, stirring constantly until the raspberries break down and the jam reaches 105°C. Add the lemon juice, stir well, then set aside to cool.

To make the frangipane filling, beat the softened butter, lemon zest and sugar in a bowl until creamy. Add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Next, stir in the almond meal, oat flour, oats and salt; mix until smooth.

To assemble the tart, spread a fine layer of raspberry jam on the bottom of the pastry shell, then add frangipane filling evenly over it. Arrange the raspberries gently on top, pressing them slightly into the frangipane filling.

Bake the tart at 165°C for 25-30 minutes, until the frangipane is set and golden. >



GAMEKEEPER'S PIE
SERVED WITH CLAPSHOT



"The welcome we've received has been amazing – as people from the other side of the earth, it has been really special," says Bob. "The relationships we've built mean that we call them suppliers, but we also call them friends." **FACING PAGE** The gamekeeper's pie is packed with tasty game meat, freshly picked vegetables and flavoursome herbs.

FOOD *Bream Creek Tas*

To make the glaze, gently warm the apricot jam and whisky in a small pot. Whisk the mixture until it thickens, then brush it over the tart and garnish with the toasted oats and almonds.

Allow cranachan tart to cool before removing from the tin. Serve it warm or at room temperature with the whisky honey custard.

WHISKY HONEY CUSTARD

Makes about 500ml

250ml whole milk

250ml cream

100g egg yolks

50g caster sugar

60g honey

Choice of whisky, to taste

(we use Laphroaig)

To make the custard, pour the milk and cream into a small saucepan. Heat gently until just below boiling, when little bubbles form around the edge, then remove from heat.

In a bowl, whisk the egg yolks, sugar and honey together until pale and slightly thickened.

Next, gradually pour a small amount of the hot milk and cream into the egg mixture, whisking constantly to prevent curdling. Slowly add the rest of the milk, continuing to whisk.

Pour the mixture back into the saucepan. Cook gently over a low heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, scraping the base to avoid sticking – do *not* allow it boil. The custard is ready when it thickens enough to coat the back of the spoon (about 75-80°C).

Remove the custard from heat and pour it into a jug. Allow it to cool down, then add the whisky. Keep the custard aside until ready to serve. *CF*

CRANACHAN TART WITH WHISKY HONEY CUSTARD



"We like to say that our food is about the produce. We use the techniques we've learned, which are simple but very hard to execute, so you've really got nowhere to hide," says Jillian. **FACING PAGE** Packed with juicy raspberries, the cranachan tart is served with delectable whisky honey custard.