

Escape

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS *Dec/Jan 2021*



STAY, PLAY, EAT, DRINK & EXPLORE

**FAMILY FARM
STAYS & THINGS
TO DO**

**MUMMA'S
CHRISTMAS
COOKING**

**LOCAL
DRINKS TO SIP
THIS SUMMER**

Bendooley — Estate — LARDER



CHRISTMAS CATERING

Let us take the hassle out of planning this Christmas with our exquisite catering menu. From our signature glazed ham, lamb with rosemary jus, delicious fresh prawns and a wonderful range of sides, all you will need to do is sit back and enjoy your Christmas feast with a glass of bubbles.

GIFT HAMPERS

Looking for a unique Christmas gift this year? We have a range of gift hampers available featuring a fabulous selection of items from The Larder. Choose from one of our 3 pre-made options or create your own from a variety of items in store.

WINE

Order your wine & bubbles online from Bendooley Estate and have it delivered with your catering. A stress free Christmas with the help of Bendooley Estate Larder.

For details of our catering menu & hampers visit our website.

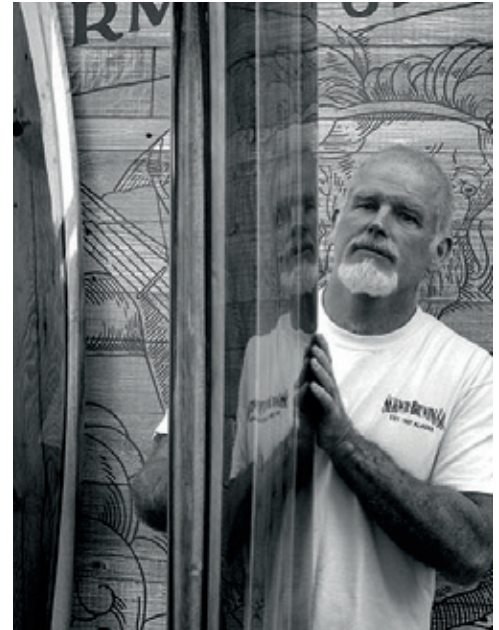


HELLO PETAL

It's always encouraging to see green shoots, and Penrose horticulturalist Jen Foster, founder of Southern Highlands Flower Farm, has been busy since beginning her farm from scratch on five acres two years ago. Join Jen and other green thumbs for her first open day. There will be a sunflower maze for the kids, lots of resident animals to pat and walking tours through the farm. Or book and join Jen for a Flower Bouquet Workshop. Pick your own flowers, learn how to arrange them and take them home. Open Day is Saturday, January 16 and the Flower Bouquet Workshop is on Saturday, January 30. southernhighlandsflowerfarm.com.au

SUMMER HIGH

Unleash your creative beast at famed craft and design centre Sturt's Summer School. Week-long courses include everything from painting to drawing to weaving, ceramics, printmaking, wood carving and the art of the smartphone. Esteemed teachers include Juliet Holmes a Court, Hiroshi Yamaguchi, Tony Ameneiro, Catriona Pollard, Helen Earl and Rachel Milne. Due to COVID-19, there will be no accommodation, meals or social events on offer but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy some uplifting and invigorating new learning in the classroom. So, if you're looking for a unique present, or you have some time free and want to give yourself some creative love, check out Sturt's wonderful schedule of classes. Monday, January 4 to Friday, January 8. Sturt, cnr Range Road and Waverley Parade, Mittagong sturt.nsw.edu.au



LOVE SHAC

The Southern Highlands Artisans Collective is extending Christmas celebrations from December 4 through to January with its Summer Fair Exhibition. It's a great place to make a beeline for if you are after something unique, handmade and creative for your stocking this year. December 4 to January 26. Open Friday to Monday, 10am to 4pm. 74-76 Hoddle Street, Robertson. theshac.com.au



MAKE IT TO MARKET

And our regulars: Robertson Markets, Sunday December 13, 9am to 2pm, School of Arts, Hoddle Street, Robertson. Mittagong Markets, Saturday December 19, 8am to 2pm, United Church, cnr Albert and Alice streets, Mittagong. Exeter Village Market, Saturday December 5, 9am to 1.30pm, Exeter Village Hall and Oval, Exeter. Bundanoon Makers Market, Sunday December 6 and 20, 8.30am to 2pm, Bundanoon Memorial Hall, Railway Parade, Bundanoon. Bowral Public School Market, Saturday December 12, 8am to 1pm, Bendooley Street, Bowral. Twilight Christmas Market, Tuesday December 22, 3pm to 7pm, Bowral Bowling Club, Shepherd Street, Bowral.

DOGGIE DONATIONS

Wingecarribee Animal Shelter at Moss Vale is staffed by a dedicated group of animal lovers, Friends of Wingecarribee Animal Shelter (FOWAS), who each year take in and rehome 400 surrendered, lost and mistreated cats and dogs. Christmas is an important time for FOWAS to fundraise so if you know an animal lover, grab a copy of the FOWAS Dog Calendar 2021 from local branches of BDCU Alliance Bank, Bundanoon Vets or fowas.org.au. All dogs featured were happily adopted from the animal shelter. fowas.org.au

TOP things

School's out and summer's here. Time to get out and get among it.



EASY RIDERS

Join horsey types at renowned Highlands equestrian centre Wallaby Hill for its international OTTO Sport Three-Day Event. Fun days out for those who love to ride and those who love to watch dressage, cross country and showjumping and as Olympians Shane Rose and Stuart Tinney compete against each other, and other riders vie to take home the prestigious CC14*-L Title. Entry is free for spectators. Food and liquid refreshment is available on site, or order your gourmet picnic hamper and feast on the very best Highlands produce while seated ringside. Friday, December 4 to Sunday, December 6 inclusive. 122 Wallaby Hill Road, Robertson. wallabyhill.com

LEATHER ON WILLOW SUMMERTIME IS CRICKET TIME AND THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A FAMILY KNOCK-AROUND AT THE BEACH OR IN THE BACKYARD TO GET THAT HOLIDAY FEEL. IF YOUR KIDS ARE A BIT MORE SERIOUS, BOOK THEM INTO THE STEVE WAUGH CRICKET CLINIC FOR KIDS AT BRADMAN OVAL IN BOWRAL. THE CLINIC, HELD OVER THREE DAYS, INCLUDES 18 HOURS OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT, STRATEGY AND TACTICS TALK, AND KIDS GET TO PLAY ON THE FAMED FIELD. THE FULLY SUPERVISED CLINIC IS FOR GIRLS AND BOYS AGED SIX TO 16. PERFECT FOR THOSE WOULD-BE MEG LANNINGS, ELLYSE PERRYS AND STEVE SMITHS. KEEP AN EYE ON THE WEBSITE FOR DATES. ALSO, THE BRADMAN MUSEUM AND INTERNATIONAL CRICKET HALL OF FAME, IN ST JUDE STREET, BOWRAL IS OPEN MONDAY TO SUNDAY, 10AM TO 5PM EXCEPT CHRISTMAS DAY AND GOOD FRIDAY. bradman.com.au



Morvern Valley, Bundanoon

Morvern Valley sits down a rainforest lane on 10 hectares of bush and cleared farming land near Morton National Park. There has been a guesthouse here since 1896, and owner Julie Peacock says staying here is "like returning to Grandma's farm of yesteryear". There's a host of animals for the kids to get up close to including alpacas, horses, ponies, sheep, donkeys, peacocks, ducks, chickens, geese, foals, lambs, chicks, ducklings and giant rabbits. The three self-contained cottages sleep eight people each. Tyre swings, barbecues and hen houses for egg collecting complete the farm feel. Kids can also watch seasonal jobs such as shearing and horse shoeing. Bundanoon village is a five minute stroll away and Morton National Park, fabulous for biking and bushwalking is 500 metres in the other direction. morvern-valley.com



FAMILY FARM stays

Top of the bucket list for many families visiting the Highlands is to spend time on a farm, and just in time too! A recent survey by Primary Industries Education Foundation found one-third of Aussie kids struggle to identify fruit and vegetables, and are confused about where their food

comes from. Like not knowing denim jeans are made from cotton, a plant crop, and being unaware yoghurt is an animal by-product. Time then to take the bull by the horns and introduce your brood to the country at these fabulous local farm and bush stays.

Laurel View, Robertson

Butchers John and Vicki Mauger know a thing or two about cows. The owners of Maugers Meats Burrang and Moss Vale, the Maugers raise their cattle and sheep on this 120 hectares, which is also the location of their farmstay, Laurel View. In the family since the 1950s, this period property has lovely gardens, sumptuous furnishings and 360 degree views of lush Robertson paddocks. This is also a busy working farm, and kids are free to wander about and soak it all in. laurelview.net.au

Escape also loves

Exeter Farm Stay, Exeter
exeterfarmstay.com.au

Hideout, Moss Vale
hideoutcabins.com.au

The Loch, Berrima
theloch.net.au





Cliff House on Platypus Gorge, Paddys River

Roger Fagan first laid eyes on this property along the Wollondilly River nearly 20 years ago and bought it on sight. Retired now, Roger and partner Nicky offer more than 10 different campsites for tents and campervans along the river, and one privately situated self-contained barnhouse. With beds for six, Cliff House on Platypus Gorge sits above the Wollondilly and shares the space with wombats, kangaroos, wallabies and birds galore. If you are lucky, you might even meet the elusive platypus locals in the river. Take the kids' bikes and their cossies. bowralglampingandcamping.com

Twin Falls Bush Cottages, Fitzroy Falls

If you want to get the family enthused about the bush, biking is a great place to start. And Twin Falls is a notable launchpad for biking and bushwalking as the magnificent Fitzroy Falls are just a short walk away. Home of Olympian cyclist Brad McGee, wife Sharni and their family, Twin Falls sits next to Morton National Park and has five cedar cabins, some of which sleep up to six, on 20 hectares of bush. Guests are free to use the barbecue and pool area and kids will love the tennis court and trampoline. There is even a specially made kids' bike track. Family members such as saddleback pigs, goats, chickens and ponies add to the truly relaxed country feel.

twinfallsbushcottages.com



Fairway Farm, Wildes Meadow

Hardworking dairy farmers Judy and Don Warner have been welcoming guests to their 50 hectare Wildes Meadow property for more than 20 years. Accommodation is a fully self-contained unit which sleeps five with a private entrance off the main house, and is cosy and comfortable. But it's the location and resident farmyard animals that keep their guests returning every year, and kids are encouraged to get involved, from getting up early to watch the milking to bottle-feeding the paddy calves and lambs. "Our biggest drawcard

is we are a working dairy farm, so children can see milk does not come from a bottle," says Judy. There are also dogs, chooks, lambs, ducks, peacocks and Shetland ponies to meet, and picturesque dirt roads for bike riding and walking. Burrawang is a five-minute drive up the road. highlandsnsw.com.au/fairwayfarm



Redleaf Farm, Fitzroy Falls

Like Laurel View and Fairway Farm, Redleaf Farm is a working farm, 10 minutes drive from Moss Vale. Home of the Sparke family, it is set on 110 hectares bordering state forest which includes a beautiful waterfall. The Sparkes work hard, raising award-winning free-range pigs and sheep and breeding Highland cattle for beef. Stay in one of the property's beautifully renovated train carriages, which sleep up to six and four respectively, and the kids can truly let their hair down. There are chooks, ducks, geese, ponies and a creek with a flying fox and canoes plus lots of places to bushwalk and mountain bike. For a taster, book one of Redleaf's farm tours. We guarantee the kids will want to come back for a longer stay. redleaf-farm.com



SHED 85, Moss Vale

A five-minute drive from Moss Vale, hemmed by Meryla State Forest and Morton National Park and its endless bushwalk and mountain biking fire trails, Shed 85 sits on the 44-hectare property of Hugh and Edwina Savage. Shed 85, with three bedrooms and open-plan living downstairs, sleeps six and is a great way to ensure a digital detox for all ages. Cure your family of nature deficit disorder and let the kids wander around the farm to pat the ponies and silkies chickens, see the cows and generally amble about, device-free. There are deer, wombats, kangaroos, kookaburras, wallaroos, echidnas, eagles and black cockatoos resident here, too. A lovely return to nature. shed85.com



BAUBLES BABY

Joadja Estate Winery, Joadja

Five years ago, Siobhan Maloy and Matt Toomey were looking for a tree-change, so they bought a vineyard and jumped in boots and all. Today, the enterprising and hard-working young vintners have a good thing going at Joadja Estate. Their regular family friendly Jazz in the Vines muso sessions are a hit, and they have some tasty vintages, such as their sparkling wines range, Highlands Bling. Looking for sweet, refreshing bubbles as an aperitif this summer? Try Joadja Estate's Sparkling Moscato. Want a zesty addition to your Buck's Fizz? Go the Sparkling Chardonnay Pinot Noir. Tasty and with a bit of sparkle to match. Open Saturday and Sunday, 10am to 5pm, or by appointment. 110 Joadja Road, Joadja. joadjawinery.com.au

DRINKS ON THE TERRACE

Centennial Vineyards, Bowral

Centennial Vineyards' recently finished Terrace is another jewel in the crown of this award-winning vineyard and winery overlooking 32 hectares of grapes including chardonnay, riesling, traminer, pinot Meunier, tempranillo and cold climate pinot noir. Try a bottle of Centennial's Blanc de Blancs, applauded winemaker Tony Cosgriff's sparkling white recently awarded a gold medal in the 2020 NSW Wine Awards, or why not settle in and sample the lot? This is the perfect venue to show off the Highlands to visiting friends, or to share a table for some festive or holiday drinks. Open seven days, 10am to 5pm. 252 Centennial Road, Bowral. centennial.net.au

GET IN THE SPIRIT

Artemis Wines, Mittagong

Forget your Negronis, your Kir Royales and your Moscow Mules this summer and mix up a homegrown number instead. Artemis Wines' Pinot Noir Gin Float cocktail is a cheeky little number that goes down a treat. Muddle up 5-6 blueberries in a short glass. Top with ice. Pour over 45ml of Artemis Goddess Gin and top with tonic water leaving a 1cm space at the top. (Artemis's clever winemaking Balog brothers favour Fever-tree Mediterranean tonic.) Now using the back of a spoon, slowly pour in Artemis Pinot Noir. Open Monday and Tuesday, 8am to 4pm. Wednesday to Sunday, 11am to 4pm. 46 Sir Charles Moses Lane, Mittagong. artemiswines.com.au

VINE OF THE TIMES

Tertini Wines, Mittagong

Jonathan Holgate, one of the Highlands' acclaimed winemakers, was integral in Tertini's newly released sparkling white 2018 Blanc de Blancs, made from 100 per cent Chardonnay grapes grown and hand harvested locally. This fresh and complex little number has been bottle fermented and aged on lees for 24 months before disgorging, a traditional winemaking method particularly favoured in Champagne, France. Pop a cork or two for Chrimbo! tertiniwines.com.au



WHISKY A GO-GO

Joadja Distillery, Joadja

Take a trip out to what surely must be one of Australia's most fascinating distilleries (book a tour around the historic site before you go) and get your stock of liquid gold sorted. Joadja's Single Malt Whisky Cask Strength, described by Tasting Australia Spirit Awards 2020 as 'restrained perfection', is one of distillers Valero and Elise Jimenez's first paddock to bottle offerings, made using their own water, barley and yeast. Or if you're looking for a something with a fruitier nose, grab a bottle of Joadja Pedro Ximénez. This is a fortified wine with a 15 per cent alcohol kick, drawn from the sherry barrels the couple imports from Jerez in northern Spain to mature Joadja's single malt whisky which, according to Val, tastes like "a Christmas cake in a bottle". And if gin is your poison, Joadja's Dry Gin, with botanical notes of juniper, lemon myrtle, cardamom, angelica root, coriander and aniseed, comes highly recommended. Perfect! Open Saturday and Sunday, 10am to 5pm, or by appointment. End of Joadja Road, Joadja. joadjadistillery.com.au



DRINKS *table*

Looking for a bottle or a case or two to imbibe this summer? Look no further than some of our award-winning cellar doors and keep it local as we all drink good riddance to 2020. Salute!

CRAFTED HEAVEN

Eden Brewery, Mittagong

Lots of beer makers claim to be boutique but Mittagong gem Eden Brewery is the real deal. Eden, a small craft brewing operation with a true community heart, was founded by husband and wife team Jacob and Deb Newman. The Newmans, who hail from the US, and once were missionaries, really do love their beer and their community, globally and grassroots. Easy to say? Yes, but the proof is in Eden's pudding. One-tenth of Eden Brewery's profits go to Oxfam, and locals have told *Escape SH* how Jacob has been known to turn up unannounced and give a kitchen-full of whitegoods to locals such as Andy and Ellie Thomson, who were doing it tough after losing their Bundanoon home in the January bushfires. So, this is one good couple making truly good beer. Ergo, this year, why not forgo those mass-produced ales and buy an outstanding local brew like Eden's annual Christmas Gingerbread Beer, made in collaboration with the equally fabulous Gumnut Patisserie just across the street. And if you're in the vicinity as summer heats up, try out Eden's inhouse Beer-Garitas, frozen margarita floating about in Eden's speciality beer. Leave one out for the man in the red suit and make all his Christmases come at once. Open Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, 12pm to 8pm, and Friday, 12pm to 10pm. 1/19 Cavendish Street, Mittagong. edenbrewery.beer





Mumma's Country Cooking

Helen Vlahakis knows sometimes if you allow a lifelong interest to simmer, it will organically come to the boil.

WORDS ALEX SPEED IMAGES ELISE HASSEY

Helen Vlahakis, a former solicitor and a mother of four, grew up cooking in her Greek grandmother's kitchen. And when she and husband George, a lawyer, bought a 44 hectare property at Canyonleigh 10 years ago, she felt her childhood culinary roots stir.

"Being of Greek background, I grew up in a family which was really into cooking and had backyard vegie gardens," says Helen from her kitchen in the couple's new home in Kangaloon, from where she runs her Mumma's Country Kitchen cooking workshops.

"Both my mum and dad are from the Peloponnese and they were part of that Greek story of coming out to Australia with basically nothing and working two or three jobs while the grandparents babysat us."

It was Helen's maternal grandmother, Eleni, who introduced her to the joys of cooking.

"My grandma used to babysit my brother, me and our cousins and she would always plonk us on the bench if we would sit still long enough and she'd keep us there with her while she was cooking," Helen says. "Whether she was chopping tomatoes or whatever ... and she was a really good cook."

Two years ago, Helen and George sold their Canyonleigh weekender and bought a 1908 farmhouse on 40 hectares in Kangaloon.

"When we were living between Canyonleigh and Sydney, I had started my Mumma's Country Kitchen blog," says Helen.

"We planted a big vegie patch at Canyonleigh and we had an orchard at the farm and often during the week I would drop the kids off at school in the morning, drive down and tend to all the fruit and vegies.

"We had peaches, plums, pears, citrus and all sorts of vegies and I would come back to Sydney with 10 kilos of cucumbers and all the

school mums would ask, 'What are you going to do with those?'.

"So I started blogging about how to use and cook with all these different ingredients, and then I held a few weekend cooking retreats and it sort of grew from there."

Still practising then as a solicitor, Helen was also blogging for her husband's legal firm but found the demands of parenthood and the law did not gel.

"It came time to focus on the kids and let go of being a solicitor, because I couldn't do my job properly and be a mum, too," says Helen. "Answering calls to clients, you can't say, 'Sorry, I'm at a swimming lesson ... you spend your million dollars on that house and I'll get back to you'."

The family made the decision to move permanently to the Highlands two years ago and Helen's love of cooking shifted front and centre.

They keep chickens, goats, a few sheep and a black angus. A vegetable garden and an orchard supply much of the produce that appears in Helen's day-long cooking workshops, which also include a farm tour, morning tea, a hands-on cooking workshop and then a lunch to enjoy the morning's spoils.

Workshops in the run-up to Christmas include Edible Gifts For Christmas and A Christmas Farm to Table Menu. Workshops are limited to a maximum of six people.

"I really like people who come on my workshops to get their hands dirty with each of the dishes we learn how to make," says Helen.

"That's how my grandmother taught me and that's how I like to pass along her knowledge and love of cooking." ■

Christmas melomakarona

These aromatic cookies are a traditional Greek Christmas sweet. They are usually egg shaped, but I love to use Christmas cookie cutters to give them a more festive feel. This recipe makes 30 to 35 biscuits.

1 cup vegetable oil	1 tsp baking powder
½ cup white caster sugar	1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
1 cup freshly squeezed orange juice	½ cup finely chopped walnuts, plus 1 cup extra
1 tsp ground cinnamon	1 tsp cinnamon sugar
½ tsp ground cloves	1¼ cups honey
4½-5 cups plain flour	3 whole cloves

1. Preheat oven to 160C (fan-forced). Grease and line two or three large baking trays and set aside.
2. Beat oil and sugar on medium speed in a stand mixer until mixture starts going white (about 4 minutes). Add juice, cinnamon and cloves and beat well.
3. Meanwhile, sift 4½ cups flour, baking powder and bicarb soda into a large bowl and mix in ½ cup walnuts. Slowly add to oil mixture and beat on lowest speed until flour is just incorporated. Turn machine off and test dough with your fingers. If it sticks to your hands, add extra ½ cup sifted flour and test again. If it still sticks to your hands or can't be rolled into a ball, add 1 tablespoon of flour a little at a time until desired consistency. If too tight, add a little more juice.
4. Pat dough into a square about 30cm x 30cm and 1.5cm thick. Use cookie cutters to cut dough into shapes and place on trays.
5. Use a fork to lightly press down on each cookie to leave indents on top. Re-roll and keep cutting shapes until you have used all the dough.
6. Bake cookies for about 30 minutes. Remove from oven and cool completely on trays.
7. Mix extra walnuts and cinnamon sugar in a bowl and set aside.
8. In a small saucepan, heat honey, cloves and ½ cup water until texture is runny and begins to simmer. Lower heat to lowest possible simmer point and place two or three cooled cookies at a time into the saucepan, turning each biscuit a couple of times to soak up honey.
9. Place on a tray lined with baking paper and sprinkle with walnut/cinnamon sugar mixture. Repeat with remaining cookies and enjoy!

Blueberry pavlova wreath

Before you start, ensure your stand mixer bowl and whisk attachment are absolutely clean, dry and free of any traces of grease.

<i>Meringue</i>	1 cinnamon stick
4 egg whites, at room temperature	1 star anise
1 cup white caster sugar	3 tsp lemon juice
2 tsp cornflour, sifted	<i>Vanilla whipped cream</i>
1 tsp white vinegar	2 cups thickened cream
1 tsp vanilla bean paste	3 tbsp icing sugar, sifted
<i>Blueberry compote</i>	1 tsp vanilla bean paste
3 x 125g punnets blueberries	<i>Baby mint leaves and</i>
3 tbsp water	<i>blueberries to garnish</i>
2 tbsp honey	<i>(optional)</i>

1. To make meringue, draw a 20cm circle on a large piece of baking paper and then a 13cm circle within larger circle. This will give you an outline of the wreath. Turn paper upside down on a baking tray and set aside.
2. Set oven rack in middle of oven and preheat to 120C (fan-forced).
3. To make meringue, place egg whites in bowl of stand mixer and whisk until firm peaks. Add caster sugar, one teaspoon at a time, whisking well between each addition, until mixture is thick and glossy.
4. Add cornflour, vinegar and vanilla paste and whisk until combined. Place large dollops of meringue within circle markings on baking paper to make wreath, making sure dollops just touch each other. Use a spatula to smooth surface a little.
5. Bake pavlova for 75-90 minutes or until it is lovely and dry and you are able to easily lift it off the paper without it sticking. Turn off oven and leave door ajar (I like to place a wooden spoon in door) for at least 3 hours or until pavlova is completely cold.
6. Meanwhile, make compote by placing all the ingredients, except 1 punnet of blueberries, in a small saucepan and bring to medium heat. Once it starts bubbling, reduce heat and cook for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally to mash fruit.
7. Add remaining blueberries and cook for a further 7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until mixture is slightly thickened. Remove from heat and allow to cool completely.
8. Just before serving, make vanilla whipped cream by combining chilled cream, icing sugar and vanilla paste in bowl of stand mixer. Whisk on medium speed until soft peaks form and it holds its shape. Be careful at this stage, as cream can go from ready to overbeaten in seconds.
9. To assemble, place pavlova wreath on a serving plate. Place whipped cream on top of wreath and top with dollops of compote. Garnish with a few baby mint leaves and blueberries if you like. Slice and serve immediately.





MAKER



COUTURIER



UPHOLSTERER

Johanne Trapnell - MAKER

Joh Trapnell is the Creative Director behind Suite Recovery. Custom designer and maker of unique soft furnishings specialising in slip covers. Celebrating 20 years of business in 2020

Tania Doria - COUTURIER

Tania Doria is a designer and maker specialising in made to measure bridal and costume with a passion for fabrics and vintage style. Tania also moonlights as a singer and songwriter.

Jonti Roland - UPHOLSTERER

Jonti Roland is a young creative specialising in custom upholstery and furniture repairs. Amongst all his other side hustles, Jonti is also known for his unique photography and videography. Instagram @roland_photos

No.96

96A MAIN STREET, MITTAGONG NSW 2575

Instagram @suiterecovery @roland_upholstery @tania_couturier



"Yolo" oil on canvas 30 x 40 cm. By Stephanie Tetu

Galerie Têtu, a fresh contemporary art space situated within The SHAC art complex in the picturesque village of Robertson.

Watch this space for upcoming exhibitions in 2021. Featuring: Jenny Lavender in March, Javier Baez Bonorat in April, Maria Gorton in May, Stephanie Tetu and friends in June, Julie Hook in August, Anna Price in September and Elizabeth Clarke in October.

Come and visit us.

Stephanie Tetu
Artist / Curator / Owner
GalerieTêtu

Shop 4, 74/76 Hoddle St, Robertson
+ 61 407 683 739 | Open Fri to Mon 10am to 4pm
f @ galerietetu | www.galerietetu.com.au

Galerie TÊTU



For more magical
Highlands weddings visit:

ESCAPESOUTHERNHIGHLANDS.COM.AU

NATURAL BUSH BEAUTY

Ellie Grace and Rocco Mimmo met on a “deathly hot summer’s night” and were bound by partying friends and instant attraction. The couple re-live their magical marriage celebration at Weddings in the Wilde with photographs by Alex Jack.

With the recent arrival of their first child, life is busy for Ellie Grace and Rocco Mimmo. But through the baby fog, there is still plenty of fun and mischief. Just ask how they met.

“Ha. That is controversial!” laughs Ellie, who works in human services in NSW’s Hunter Valley and Central Coast. “Rocco assures me we met many years ago at an abandoned warehouse party where I was pressuring him to talk with my recently single friend. But my first memory was on Australia Day 2013 at another party. I had to take my friend, who was sick, to the bathroom and Rocco was trying to have a shower. I kept flushing the loo, turning his shower cold. Many giggles were had.”

Cold showers aside, Ellie says their relationship rapidly progressed into “traditional courting, conversations, walks, dinners, which rapidly evolved into us not spending time apart”.

“Rocco is disgustingly good looking,” teases Ellie, “which undeniably caused the initial eyebrow raise. I do clearly remember hearing his amazing laugh and thinking that it was incredible. Within the first few weeks of meeting, Rocco had all of our mutual friends over to his place and cooked an Italian feast, homemade pasta, the lot, all while listening to Pavarotti at top volume. That likely had me - hook, line and sinker.”

As Ellie remembers it, it was Rocco, a civil designer, who first uttered the ‘L’ word.

“He definitely told me he loved me first, but I was chuffed and absolutely smitten that I had snagged him. Never looked back.”

While Ellie noticed her Italian man’s fervour, Rocco was attracted to Ellie’s caring qualities.

“Initially it was Ellie’s cool demeanour, her calm and relaxed attitude, a nonchalant personality that struck a chord. Also the fact she was always tending to her friends,” he says. “Her beauty also definitely aroused the senses. The courting phase only emphasised these and allowed for all her other amazing qualities to flow through.”

In June 2018, the couple travelled around Ireland and Scotland.

“We did the beautiful Quiraing hike on the Isle of Skye and the old boy got down on one knee and popped the question,” says Ellie. “It was such a nice moment. We hiked back down and were greeted at our campervan by three and a half million midges. Then we had dinner in the dingiest pub, but Roc made up for it by booking us into a castle the following night, which was magic.”

Once home, Ellie and Rocco started looking for their ideal wedding venue. Prerequisites for the couple were a property set in natural beauty, and room to accommodate friends and family.

“As soon as we visited Weddings in the Wilde, we were happy,” says Rocco. “The property is spectacular while being incredibly practical.”

“And the bush chapel was one of our favourite parts of our wedding,” says Ellie. “It’s nestled in the greenest forest, with this incredible bush track down to it. It’s all timber with natural light, and once the candles and lanterns were lit, it was surreal and very special.”



DETAILS

Venue

Weddings in the Wilde,
Fitzroy Falls
weddingsinthewilde.com.au

Bride's dress

Made with Love Bridal
madewithlovebridal.com

Groom's suit

Suit Shop by P. Johnson
suitshop.com.au

Photographer

Alex Jack Photography
[@alexjack.photography](https://www.instagram.com/alexjack.photography)

Videographer

Adam Singer
[adamsinger.work](https://www.instagram.com/adamsinger.work)

Florist

Olivia Meredith,
The Little Flower Shop
[@thelittleflowershop](https://www.instagram.com/thelittleflowershop)

Music

Matt Walker
mattwalker.com.au

Bride's hair

[@thebridalhairstudio](https://www.instagram.com/thebridalhairstudio)

Food catering

For my Senses
[@formysenses](https://www.instagram.com/formysenses)

Event styling

[@sustainablesurrounds](https://www.instagram.com/sustainablesurrounds)

Cocktail cart

[@blacksmithcoffeeroasters](https://www.instagram.com/blacksmithcoffeeroasters)



They also loved the fact Weddings in Wilde is a blank canvas in terms of catering and organisation. "We loved that we had the option to arrange our own food, drinks, decor and music. We have so many amazing friends within these fields and to have them included like this for our wedding was something special for us," says Ellie.

The evening before their wedding, the couple's families and bridal parties arrived.

"This was the best," says Ellie. "We got to hug and have beautiful words with everyone over a casual barbecue and red wine. Rocco went and stayed with his siblings at a nearby house, to keep it ever so slightly traditional. We felt really relaxed and calm with our most special people around us."

On their wedding morning, Ellie and Rocco got ready with their separate parties, before strolling to the bush chapel to marry in front of 180 guests at 2pm. Ellie's mum gave her away.

"I had my one and only sister and seven incredibly close friends as my bridesmaids. Roc had his brother as best man, and seven close friends as groomsmen," says Ellie.

"But my Dad was very unwell in the week prior to the wedding and we had to make the decision to proceed without him, the most emotional week of my life. We had a little part two wedding with Dad later and we were so lucky he made a full recovery."

The couple and their guests feasted on a buffet style dinner with roasted lamb and baked chicken. They also had a grazing table and a cocktail cart.

One of the highlights for Ellie and Rocco was not having to leave the venue. "After the ceremony, we went straight back to drink and dance. It was such a smooth, relaxing day and night," says Rocco.

Another of the day's highlights was the music, thanks to Byron Bay based musician Matt Walker and his band.

"We danced so hard from the minute dinner and speeches ended until well after midnight," says Rocco. "A number of our guests pulled out their drums and instruments and played with the band. There was some serious interpretive dance going on at one stage."

After three days, celebrations came to an end, and the couple honeymooned on the NSW South Coast, says Ellie. "We were both absolutely exhausted, which strangely took us by surprise. So, we were grateful to just rest and reflect on the week."


Looking back, the best thing about their big day, apart from the 'I do's' was being able to be all together in the one spot for three days.

"The venue allows for people to drift off to bed at midnight or stay up in the amazing tee pee until dawn," says Ellie. "We felt that everyone was happy, comfortable and having a great time."

Rocco agrees. "It was like the best party you have ever been to, and you feel like a million dollars, and then bam ... you get to marry your best friend. It's like no other feeling!" 📍

MY NAME IS *Rick Shepherd*

Rick Shepherd is head gardener at Retford Park, Bowral, a jewel in the National Trust's crown, bequeathed by late media mogul James Fairfax. Rick believes his former employer's gift to the nation is significant "because it is a rare example of an intact agricultural village. The mansion, workers' cottages, stables, even a school house all within the curtilage of manicured gardens and cattle pastures," he says. "The magnificent gardens consist of century old trees, hedged gardens and a beautiful pool and pool house by Guilford Bell, but my favourite thing has to be The Green Room. This formal hedged space, designed by David Wilkinson, has the magnificent sculpture Euphoric Angels by Inge King as the centrepiece." The property is also the site of Ngunungulla, the emerging Southern Highlands Regional Gallery, which is taking shape in the old dairy. Retford Park is open to the public on the first weekend of every month for strolls around the garden and tours of the historic Italianate mansion from 10am to 4pm. Bookings essential. nationaltrust.org.au

 @rick_shepherd @nationaltrustnsw

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My life in five words is... family, friends, food, fun, outdoors. **We moved to the Southern Highlands in...** 2011 when I came to work for James Fairfax as head gardener at Retford Park. **I love the Highlands because...** it takes me back to my rural upbringing. **My favourite thing to do here is...** bushwalking with my wife Louise. **Followers of my Instagram see...** piccies of the Retford Park garden and all of the stories it holds, from old trees to foggy mornings, beautiful flowers, friendly birds, heritage buildings and mossy paths. **The most precious piece of gardening advice I ever received was...** be patient. **I started gardening...** when I was a child growing up on a farm in Western Australia. Dad had a vegie garden and I was soon hooked. **The first thing I always say to people who tell me they want a life in horticulture is...** you probably won't get rich, but you will be happy. **When it comes to being a gardener, the thing that drives me is...** always trying to be eco-friendlier, building life into the soil and promoting biodiversity. **Being head gardener here allows me to...** show visitors that a large and beautiful garden can be managed without the use of harmful chemicals. **The work I am most proud of here is...** The Blobbery. My reworking of the Fountain Walk Grey Garden, designed by John Codrington, has become an iconic feature of Retford Park. **The things I hope our gardens give visitors are...** joy, solace and inspiration. **Away from Retford Park, I love to...** swim in the ocean, especially if there is a swell! **Other gardens not to miss in the Southern Highlands include...** Harper's Mansion, Berrima, and Red Cow Farm, Sutton Forest. **The one garden in the world I would most love to visit is...** Cruden Farm in Victoria. The curving driveway of gums has been photographed and written about endlessly but every time I've been in Melbourne it has been closed! **And finally, please finish this sentence...** head gardeners never die, they just... nap under a shady tree. ■

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the garden path”*



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