

Dear Subscriber,

Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter. In this issue:

- New 2010 Tours and Portfolio for the rest of the year
- Private Tours for Small Groups
- Marieke's Diary
- Art of Cuisine + Classes
- Armchair Traveller
- Postcard from Gujarat

I invite you to consider one of our special destinations for a unique travel experience in 2010 or next year.

Dates for the Bali Yoga retreat and thrilling Cooking with the Raj Tour have now been finalised.

Join one of our tours or let me plan a private journey for you with sensitive expertise.

We also bring you the latest news about cooking, classes, books, the garden and recent travels in India, as well as connections to people and places we like.

Please take time to visit my blog at: <http://mariekesjournal.blogspot.com/> and give us your comments.

We look forward to seeing you or hearing from you in the near future.

warmest regards,

Marieke

## ART of TRAVEL NEW TOUR ANNOUNCEMENTS

*"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards."*

Soren Aabye Kierkegaard (5 May 1813 – 11 November 1855) Danish philosopher and theologian



### Spirit of BALI Yoga Retreat 2-9 July

Once again we are honoured to be collaborating with Albert Hennick, an inspirational yoga master from Adelaide.

This week combines a sublime vacation in one of Bali's unspoiled intimate seaside locations with expert, empathetic, dynamic personalised yoga instruction for all levels of experience; resident chef, Sussa's healthy delicious local cuisine, from the land and sea;

opportunities for excursions that take you to the heartland of Bali, and access to activities that are invigorating and exciting: local markets, traditional villages, holy sites, weaving and basket-making families, scuba diving and snorkelling, white-water rafting, natural healing practitioners and massage..... **Book Now as only a few Spaces Remain!**



## [Cooking with the Raj: 30 October – 11 November](#)

Join Marieke who shares with you the history and nuances of Indian cuisine in a mix of days that might include a discussion, a demonstration or a hands-on class and meeting with the scions of Rajput clans who are custodians of priceless culinary family traditions. Highlights include Cocktails “at home” with the Jodhpur Royal family, Rani Chandresh Kumari, a politician; A night at Lake Palace Hotel in magical Udaipur with a royal barge “Gangaur” party on Lake Pichola. Two nights at Devigarh Palace with hands-on cooking classes with their Executive Chef exploring spices, the cuisines from the four corners of India and Ayurvedic

dietary principles. A further two nights at the very special, luxurious tented camp of Chhatra Sagar where the family manage their own organic farm that provides superior produce for delectable cuisine. The program ends in Jaipur at Rajvillas with an elephant picnic safari, and time to explore this fascinating city.

*“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes”.* – Marcel Proust

**Spaces are still available in the following 2010 Tours**



## [Pearls of South India: Cultural Gems: 21 August – 2 September](#)

The best-selling travelogue *1,000 Places to See Before You Die* describes the river kingdom of Kerala as “staggeringly beautiful,” and it is. However, the “Pearls” sojourn also travels to the utterly charming old French enclave of Pondicherry where colonial civilization has melded with a special spirituality, to the unique Chettinad region renowned for its food and romantic architecture as well as passing through the majestic Ghats, spice and tea plantations to

cruising the magic Backwaters, visiting private estates and families as well as some of India’s most vibrant temples.



## [Spanish Conquistadors Northern Spain: Creative Revolution 8-20 September](#)

Can any of us anymore live without chorizo or white anchovies in our pantries? We invite you to explore with us on this tour how Spain is taking the world by storm with its cuisine, wines, design, style and architecture. From beguiling Barcelona we wander on to Bilbao, San Sebastian and la Rioja and end in the

prettiest mountain village in Majorca, a stone’s throw from the Med. We dine at two of the top ten of this year’s most awarded restaurants. And sail the sparkling Med for a day, dining on fresh seafood. The only non-Spanish thing we do is eat early. We will avoid late dinners and indigestion and eat late lunches instead. Sleep in adorable accommodations from a Condé Nast’s Hot List metro hotel to a boutique Relais et Chateaux. Savour the Spanish zest for life and discover her marvellous wines and gorgeous landscapes.

## Normandy: The French Table with Marieke at Chateau Bosgouet 29 September – 6 October



**Now as only Two Spaces remain!**

Join me in this charming region of France for Autumn with its promise of wild mushrooms, chestnuts, apples, particularly succulent scallops and oysters, rich cheeses and game meats. This magical week in a gorgeously restored chateau allows you to immerse yourself in *la Vie en Normandie* with Cooking classes based on local market produce, visits to Rouen, Deauville, Monet's Giverny, Honfleur, and dining in some superlative restaurants. This makes for a most memorable week and a culinary vacation beyond expectations. We collect you from and return you to Paris where we also offer a 2-day extension that explores the gastronomic secrets of this stunning city. **Book**

### **2011 + THE INDIAN PORTFOLIO**

No one knows [India](#) like we do. Certainly this complex, intriguing and beguiling destination deserves at least one visit in a lifetime. Perhaps nowhere is there such a powerful expression of humanity. Our tours go far beneath the tourist veil to provide an intimate engagement with her people, culture and marvellous cuisine while ensuring your every comfort along the way. I invite you to join us on one of these distinctive tours.



### **Royal Tented Camps + Exotic Estates of Rajasthan: our classic luxury experience: 10-23 January 2011**

Our perennially popular, exotic and exclusive Royal Rajasthan tour highlights the best of genuine Rajasthan culture and glorious heritage properties and palaces. We always celebrate HH Maharaja Jodhpur's birthday at his Umaid Bhawan palace.

This very special tour takes in desert landscapes, private tented camps, stately regal palaces and a plethora of specially commissioned cultural events.

At the conclusion of next year's tour, we plan a very special 3-day extension at Dera Mandawa, a gorgeous boutique new private property so guests can discover **William Dalrymple's Jaipur Literary Festival** as well as **special events from the Heritage Festival**. The festival programme for 2011 includes

readings, talks, literary lunches, debates, performances and interactive activities held in the beautiful heritage property, Diggi Palace in central Jaipur. Already they have gathered luminaries from the world of literature including Richard Ford, Adam Gopnick, Annie Proulx, JM Coetzee, Junot Diaz, Nick Laird, Andrew Solomon, Malcom Gladwell to name a few.

**Reservations are now being accepted.**



## Gujarat Tribals+ Textiles: commences 30 January 2011

A special tour for those who love the road less travelled, have an adventurous heart and wish to experience fast disappearing lifestyles away from tourist crowds.

Collectors of superb textiles, photographers and explorers will thrill to this journey that also highlights remarkable architectural heritage. We meet in Ahmedabad, the surprisingly charming and fascinating capital of Gujarat. Despite its modern day advances and relative affluence, travelling through the State of Gujarat is like stepping back in time where surviving tribes live often nomadic and traditional lifestyles with immense creativity. There are also outstanding examples of Islamic and Hindu architecture often in a state of better preservation than can be found in Rajasthan.

*"It was a truly remarkable trip, and I cannot say enough how much I admire your attention to detail, logistical prowess, standards, energy and ability to make a group cohere (inspired cocktails!). You paced it all perfectly, calibrating the experience like a theatre director. I have made a list of eleven people I am going to write to about the trip and about the experience of traveling with you, we'll see who nibbles and says they want to know more... I know that many things will stay with me for life about this trip, and have inspired me on so many levels about day to day living."*

Namaste! C xx

### **This Tour can be combined with Royal Rajasthan and or the Jaipur Literary festival 2011 Extensions**

#### **Private and Small Group Travel**

For the determinedly independent traveler we are extremely well placed to design bespoke arrangements for you any where in India for any length of time. We have designed trips for honeymooners seeking romance, for highflying corporates who wish to better understand India personally as well within a global perspective, and for revelers who want to design amazingly different parties. A RECENT TESTIMONIAL:

30 March 2010

*Marieke*

*A note to thank you for all you and your India office did to make our holiday such a success.*

*I went with high expectations which resulted from my keen interest in India and the era of the Raj. Our expectations were easily exceeded.*

*The guides, managers and particularly Devender who drove us and did so much to enhance the whole experience, were overall excellent.*

*It hard to come up with a complaint but even harder to come up with a stand out highlight although I must say how much we enjoyed the villages around Narlai, Shaphura and Delwara and Jodpur (great guide) as a city. The spoil was just that.*

*The local people are wonderful and it was an added bonus to meet with Maya and her charming family and with Durga Singh and his family who made us feel as if we were guest in a home rather in a "hotel".*

*Thank you for all your planning which fitted in well and for your recommendations as to where to stay.*

*Since coming home I am doing a lot of reading – Kipling, Tod and a more recent work about the 18-21st centuries in India. I think I am a bit of a romantic in this regard and I think of India in the past as much as in the presence. The trip took me back in time and that was very special.*

*I can't wait for a second round.*

*Kind regards,*

*Hugh Davies, Melbourne*

Often in life we just wish to gather around us a few like-minded spirits and undertake a great and unique adventure. The following indicative itineraries are available to groups of at least 4 to 6 travellers. From the moment you land every small detail has been attended to, from excellent guides, to the best available accommodation and interaction with remote villages and adorable people.



### **Hidden Bhutan: The Last Himalayan Shangri-la**

This once isolated Buddhist Kingdom is rapidly transitioning into the 21<sup>st</sup> C having recently anointed a new king as well as voting in its first democracy. Yet it remains a fascinating destination of immense natural beauty with soaring peaks and vast valleys, a culture where its architecture seamlessly combines the secular and the spiritual under one roof, with a people clinging to fabulous creativity and ancient traditions as they negotiate modernity. This tour can offer any combination of trekking, great luxury, exuberant festivals, and idyllic

remoteness....

The ideal times for travel to Bhutan are April/May and September/October.



### **Forbidden Himalayas May or September**

In the northeast of Himachal Pradesh fringing the Tibetan plateau lie ancient tributaries to the Silk Route that were until recently almost inaccessible to even the most tenacious of travelers. Today the mystique of the Kinnaur and Spiti Valleys can be visited in a combination of jeep safaris and gentle trekking with possible extensions to Leh and Ladakh. These legendary routes chronicle a fascinating blend of Buddhism and Hinduism as well as startlingly diverse landscapes from thick

pine forests and fruit orchards, to snow clad peaks and moonscapes with lakes and monasteries.



### **Indian Wildlife Discoveries**

With an uncle a founding member of Project Tiger in 1973, my Indian Director is not only passionate about Indian wildlife but has developed an extensive network of the most highly trained and experienced naturalists to provide wonderful interpretative experiences. Moreover, the luxury Taj hotel group have teamed up with CC Africa expertise to now provide four luxurious game lodges with Mahua Kothi in Bandhavgarh being India's first Relais et Chateaux property and their Pench and Panna properties stealing

multiple awards from travel and design magazines this year. Search the elusive snow leopard or view the endangered Bengal tiger from the back of an elephant.

Make a wildlife safari of India your sole focus or allow us to plan an extra week after one of our tours.

From the Garden. March 2010:



Returning from the States in October saw us making another investment in trailer loads of local chicken manure and mushroom compost to build further depth and sturdiness to otherwise free draining sandy, limey soil.

A wonderful man at Boneo market had raised all manner of heritage tomatoes in handy jiffy pots and some 20 plants were placed in two sunny spots and dutifully staked. Rouge de Marmande, Beefsteaks, Tigerellas, Black Russians, Oxhearts, Black Krimms, Brandy Wines, Romas, Principe Borghese, and Grosse Lisse to name most of this year's selection. Rows

were under planted with sweet basil, several varieties of thyme and proper French tarragon.

When I left for India early February it seemed we might not get a fantastic ripening season, but to the contrary, it has been a bumper year with warm and hot days interspersed with summer rains.

Elsewhere, we planted several heirloom varieties of eggplant (that have been rather slow), several varieties of beans, amaranth, different coloured beets, cucumbers for pickling and eating, zucchini of course (that needs daily inspection or else can run away from you and turn quickly into giant marrow), a wide selection of lettuces.

Efforts to raise seedlings of *Pimientos Padrón* available from [The Italian Gardener](#) in Canberra were left too late in the season to succeed. We shall renew efforts around this superb Galician pepper that is typically served at Spanish markets, when in season, fried in fine olive until they blister and dusted with sea salt. Eating these sweet, herbaceous, occasionally hot little peppers is a little like Russian roulette as you never can tell which might be the hot one and immediately transports you back to early mornings at La Boqueria in Barcelona where they are served from the little bars. The pimientos were so well received at our Christmas cooking class at the end of 2009, most students decided to order them for their own Christmas day celebrations. For gourmands who want easy access to them the pimientos can be mail ordered from inspired musician/farmer Richard Mohan who grows exotic produce in the Noosa hinterlands and whose growing season ends late May early June. To order them go to <http://www.midyimeco.com.au/>. It may also be worth investigating if Andrew Wood, formerly originator, publisher and Editor of the much missed *Divine* magazine and now organic farmer on a rich granite strip near Heathcote, Glenora Heritage Produce, succeeded in growing them this Summer.



The *cavolo nero* cannot be killed. I have never encountered a plant that continues to reward through the seasons and for over 12 months. The new leaves became the most appreciated treat for the three chooks inherited from a friend's over-crowded run. Sybille, Eunice and Polly have brought a lively vitality to the garden, and have been spoiled with hand feeding of the said kale, as well as copious snails, caterpillars and slugs picked off the vegetables, oyster and clam shells and the like. Such spoiling has rewarded the kitchen with almost daily eggs of the most intense saffron coloured yolks. And their eggs have spoiled the cook from, well, really being able to ever buy eggs again.



The other delightful edible discovery was *Malabar Spinach* (*basella alba*) my friend Connie raised from seed from [Diggers Club](#). With some of the characteristics in terms of taste of *Kankung*, the aquatic sub tropical plant *Ipomoea aquatica*, or Water Convolvulus widely grown and beloved in SE Asia, this extremely pretty and fetching vine is fast-growing, soft-stemmed, reaching as high as 10 m. Its thick, semi-succulent, heart-shaped leaves have a mild flavour and mucilaginous texture that can be used much as English Spinach, or mixed with other greens.

As we go to press, and venture off to the outback for a serendipitous camping expedition, we have pulled most of the summer garden that is now on its last

legs. The abundance has fed us and friends continuously for nigh on five months. To the garden's bounty we have also been adding treasures from the sea: fresh abalone, pippies, calamari, crabs.

## Art Of Cuisine

### From Art of Cuisine Kitchens:

#### Tomato Cooking Tips:

- For a surfeit of tomatoes. I pack large baking trays with the tomatoes and sprinkle, sea salt, white pepper and some sugar. Tuck in some thyme and plenty of garlic cloves left whole. Pour over some olive oil and roast for a couple of hours. Pass the tomatoes through a mouli and bag into rectangular containers for the freezer. This makes the most superior tomato paste, come puree and base for soups and braises during winter.
- Tomato Tea. In a food processor, blend 3-4kgs of tomatoes in batches and tip into a very large stock pot. Add a *mirepoix* of lemon grass, ginger, galangal, lime leaf, curry leaf, spring onions, chilli and garlic. Season with salt, pepper and a touch of sugar. Barely cover with cold water and bring to a simmer for an hour. Turn off the heat and allow to infuse another hour. Tip all into a very large sieve placed over a clean pot and allow to drain freely for several hours or overnight. Taste for seasoning. This is a sublime consommé in its own right. It can be lightly jellied and set with seafood. It can be poured over roasted crab/prawns shells for a magical seafood broth. It can be boiled to reduce to a jam like consistency for a total tomato concentrate.
- For Roma tomatoes: split tomatoes in half lengthwise. Place onto a flat baking tray lined with bakers paper. Sprinkle with salt, pepper, sugar and sumac. Place in a low oven for at least a couple of hours until tomatoes have the texture of moist dried fat apricots. Delicious as a base for a tomato tarte, or a salad.
- An incomparable Salad. Pick tomatoes fresh from the garden and NEVER REFRIGERATE. Slice and intersperse the varieties and different colours onto a large platter. Sprinkle with sea salt, freshly ground white pepper and a scant sprinkling of sugar. Drizzle a fine sherry vinegar. Top with a chiffonade of basil, a crumbling of Shanklish (a yogurt based semi-dried cheese rolled in oregano) cheese. And finest extra virgin olive oil. Prepare up to an hour ahead of service so the exquisite juices develop. This makes a surprising change from the classical Mozzarella or Bocconcini- based salads. Shanklish is a Syrian or Lebanese cheese made from goat's or cow's milk, formed into orange-sized balls and coated with the tangy spice mixture za'atar.

### From the Sea:

Just after returning from India in early March was a weekend that included 2 of the permitted 60 days that the holder of an amateur fishing licence is allowed to bag a few and strictly limited **blacklip Abalone** (*Haliotis rubra*). These beautiful creatures are gastropod (stomach-footed) molluscs. Their soft bodies consist of a large muscular foot (the edible part) and internal organs that are protected by one flat ear-shaped shell. The colour of the foot generally gives the species its name. The outside of the shell is coloured to blend in with their habitat of browns, reds and green. The inside of the shell is silvery in colour much like mother-of-pearl and the meat is specially prized by Asians as an exceptional delicacy.



The weather was magical, almost sublime with very low high tides, inky calm translucent waters, sparkling days, cloudless blue skies and near perfect sea temperatures for swimming. This was my first ever experience of handling absolutely fresh abalone straight from the sea. In Kauai last year we had the chance to work with frozen shells the size of small footballs, but this was entirely a different kettle of fish, and very exciting.

Extensive web research revealed basically 2 schools of thinking for [shucking](#) and [cleaning](#) the shells' meat, the Japanese-style one seeming to be all together more culinarily intelligent and respectful of such exotic, live, raw produce, as well as being efficient and the least messy. In short, it is possible to cleverly extract the delicate white meat and leave behind all the guts attached to the shell.

Once cleaned, the common school of slicing the ab is to cut horizontally, parallel to the bottom of the shell, then use a mallet to tenderize. We sliced half this way, but so thinly that beating the fillets seemed redundant. The other half were sliced in wafer thin vertical slices with a sushi knife. To round off the experiment we also cooked the abalone in two different ways. The first half were briefly seared in *beurre noisette* and simply finished with some tamari. The remainder were lightly dusted in besan (chickpea) flour with spices and sea salt and shallow fried in olive oil to crisp the exterior. Both were quite outstanding in flavour and the texture in the two different cooking techniques imperceptible. Very rich, a rare treat, but one to look forward to again at a future date.

Another of this season's joyful discoveries has been the humble **Pipi (*Donax deltoids*)**, closely related to cockles, clams and vongole, valued by our local Mediterranean communities and able to hand-harvested from the intertidal grassy shallows of the Bay. A marine bivalve mollusc with a smooth wedge-shaped, cream to pale brown shell (sometimes slightly yellow or green and with pinky-purple bands) containing dark (often bluey-purple) meat, they should be cooked after a 24 hour cleansing and exude a most fabulous juice. Spaghetti Vongole was my first welcome home meal and we have repeated it several times since.



#### To Prepare:

Take the collected pippies and after rinsing, place in a bucket of fresh sea water in a cool shady place or overnight. An hour or two before they are needed, place in a bucket of fresh water with a cup of polenta. All this effort is an attempt to rid them of their sand. Some of our fellow fishermen on the local jetties have advised that they place them on large racks sitting above a shallow quantity of sea water, so they freely spit out the sand from their shells.

#### To Cook:

##### **One kilo of fresh pippies will make a fine meal for up to 4 persons**

Boil until *al dente*, a fine hand rolled spaghetti such as *Martelli* or *Rustichelli* in a large pot of salted boiling water, drain and toss with a little extra virgin olive oil. Set aside until needed.

In a large deep fry pan, melt half butter and half olive oil. Sauté gently a cup or more of finely diced red onion or eschallots and several cloves of fresh crushed garlic and 1-2 dried chillis. When meltingly tender, add 1/2 cup of semi-sweet vermouth and half a bottle of white wine. Simmer until the juices are somewhat reduced. May be prepared ahead to this stage.

#### To Finish:

Bring the onion base back to the boil. Add drained pippies and a few handfuls of cherry tomatoes sliced in half. Cover the pot. Check at 3 minutes and toss. Cook another 2-3 minutes until pippies are open. They will have thrown off a considerable quantity of their own sweet juice. Add the cooked spaghetti and toss to heat through. At the end, add a handful of sliced flat leaf parsley and a large nugget of fine butter to add sheen and richness.

For a more Asian-style version see [Rodney Dunn's recipe](#).

#### Let Them Eat Cake:

Dutifully laying chooks, and thereby an abundance of eggs has turned me back to baking as a way to use up such treasures.

Those oversized, over-iced and over decorated cakes you see about cafés these days are anathema to my idea of what a fine cake should be about: elegant, moist, intensely flavoured with a modest portion offering immense satisfaction. For a friend's recent birthday I resurrected an old Alice Waters recipe for marzipan cake that came out of the oven saffron coloured. It was deemed luscious, even by the youngsters.

This cakes also keeps well for up to a week, well covered in the refrigerator, but like most cakes is best the day it is baked.

## Almond Torte

1 ¼ cup c sugar  
250 gms soft crumbled pure almond paste (marzipan)  
280gm unsalted butter  
1 t vanilla essence  
6 eggs at room temperature  
1 c plain flour sieved with  
1 ½ t baking powder  
¼ t salt  
50 ml amaretto

- cream sugar, almond paste and butter until white and fluffy....about 20 minutes
- once base is creamed add eggs one at a time
- fold in flour and amaretto
- place into shallow 28cm cake tin lined with bakers paper
- bake 1 – 1 ¼ hrs in a medium hot oven (170 degrees C) until top is golden and centre has set.
- cool in tin, running knife to loosen edges. Unmould when cold. May be refrigerated, covered up to 7 days.
- to serve, dredge with icing sugar

## Art Of Cuisine CLASSES

Marieke will again teach interstate this year.

**Early May: Sydney classes at Accoutrement.** Spaces are filling fast. Tuesday evening 4 May is a demonstration class and Wednesday morning 5 May will be a hands-on session. The theme is Cooking in Autumn and dishes will include Pimientos padrón, Kim Chee (a brilliant and tasty probiotic), Seaweed Salsa, Steamed Silky Tofu with Shiitake Mushrooms and Blackbean Sauce Buckwheat Risotto with pippies, seafood and crispy fish, a Fish Tagine finishing with an Apple and Armagnac Croustade with Armagnac ice cream.

*Anyone passionate about food is of course already cooking seasonally. Even more apt is to source local and organic produce. Autumn is a time of 'mists and mellow fruitfulness', producing an inspirational abundance of foods that lend themselves to 'real' and slower cooking. Ayurveda and TCM share the view that our diet prepares us for the upcoming season and at this time we need to eat warmer, spicier, sweet and sour foods and make a gentle transition to cooler, shorter days.*

*With a legion of followers, Marieke always enthuses cooks with her innovative, accessible and achievable dishes that abound in flavours inspired by her garden and her extensive world travels.*

For reservations contact Sue or Jenna at <http://www.accoutrement.com.au/>

**Winter: Saturday 31 July and Sunday 1 August** sees Marieke travel to Adelaide to teach Indian Masterclass at the new and truly charming Sticky Rice Cooking School at Stirling in the Adelaide Hills. The 4-5 hour hands-on class will be limited to ten students who then have the opportunity to invite their partners back to join in the evening banquet with lovely wines. The class focuses on the technical and challenging elements of an extensive Indian menu that draws on the cuisines from private families and royal cooks from all corners of the fascinating sub continent. Dishes will taste truly of India and not of the generic international restaurant variety of predictable flavours.

For reservations contact Claire at <http://www.stickyricecookingschool.com.au/school.php>

**Classes with Marieke return to Rye and will be scheduled for later in May. Dates to be announced soon.**

## Ephemera and Foodie Titbits

17<sup>TH</sup> SYMPOSIUM  
OF  
AUSTRALIAN GASTRONOMY  
"GASTRONOMIC ECONOMICS"  
...CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF AUSTRALIAN  
SYMPOSIA



Having convened two [Symposiums of Australian Gastronomy](#) in 1991 and 1998, respectively in Geelong and the Grampians, and always regarded it as Australia's most significant and perspicacious forum for the intelligent and far ranging discussion of food, food philosophy, culture and politics, I was heartened to see its recent return to Adelaide. Held mostly biennially for the last 25 years, and in November '09 convened by Dr Roger Haden, this was the seventeenth symposium, dedicated to "Gastronomic Economics", a fitting subject given the current zeitgeist. I was very sad not to attend but look forward to the publication soon of the entire series of proceedings since its inauguration in 1984 at

[University of Adelaide's Research Centre for the History of Food + Drink website.](#)

The eighteenth Symposium has been snared by Canberra under the stewardship of Janet Jeffs and we will certainly let you know more about it as information unfolds. Certainly THE food event for thinking gastronomes, especially those fed up with the massive marketing machine that seems to now control all our dialogue and discussions about food in this country.

### R.I.P.

I am not party to the background of why Adelaide's Masters program in Gastronomy has been suddenly closed, but it feels an immense loss. This graduate program, a collaboration between the University and Le Cordon Bleu Institute provided a multidisciplinary approach to the study of gastronomy, encompassing history, anthropology, sociology, geography and many other disciplines within the general area of humanities and social sciences, as well as economics, nutrition, agriculture and wine studies. It was one of the few international programs for a Masters in Gastronomy.

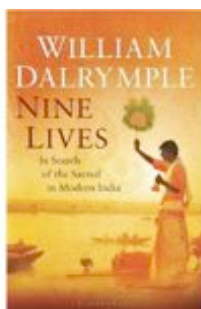
In Brooklyn in October, newsagents carried another very sudden death notice, for the venerable 70-year old American Gourmet magazine published by Condé Nast, victim of straightened economic times and advertising budgets. The considerable intelligence of its editor, Ruth Reichl, who had brought to the fore such controversial and contemporary issues to do with farming, genetic engineering, and trans fat to an erstwhile indulgent audience, her general resistance to the trend of personalities and brands, and her commitment to long thoughtful, literary pieces, is unlikely to ever be replicated again in a popular food magazine.

In today's marketplace the old dowager perhaps looked quaint and anachronistic, and I as I had not really bought an issue in over a decade, perhaps even irrelevant but I will never forget the excitement of her arrival in the 70's when our magazine recipe resource in Australia amounted to Women's Weekly, and the magazine connected us to the worlds of chefs, wine and travel.



Towards the end of the American summer last year, two legendary establishment restaurants also closed, Tavern on the Green and Café des Artistes (opened in 1917 and owned by the Langs since 1974) where 20 years ago I enjoyed the lavish floral displays and asparagus sold by the spear within its opulent walls so removed from the tumultuous streets outside. Despite their longevity they were further casualties of the economic downturn and signal for the end of the 20thC.

## From the Chair: Books



There is hardly a [William Dalrymple](#) title I have not read since he has been writing these last twenty years. Having had the good fortune to lunch with him after the 2009 Jaipur Literary festival, at which he disclosed his next work, I awaited ***Nine Lives***, his seventh book, with the most eager anticipation. Instead of writing from the perspective of authorial experience, the allure of the exotic and being the hero of his own narrative, he had committed himself once again to a travel book, but this time written so that individual voices and stories of spiritual quest would shine. I was not disappointed. From the moving opening story of a young Jain nun and how

she manages her terminal illness within the precepts of her community to “the most unreformed — and startling — of his subjects , the hardcore Tantric sadhus he encounters at the cremation ground of Tarapith in Bengal, living with jackals and vultures amid half-burned corpses and skulls and engaging in acts of ‘transgressive sacrality’ involving alcohol, hashish and ritual sex, Dalrymple remains self effacingly insightful about and deeply enamoured of the sub continent on the brink of rapid modernization.

Ruaridh Nicoll surmises: “That this book also makes its political points more powerfully than any newspaper article, while quietly adjusting a reader's attitude to faith, builds its importance. It meets Dalrymple's own criteria...., displaying a deep knowledge of the culture, yet is intimate with each interviewee. This is travel writing at its best. I hope it sparks a revival.”



### **THE WILDER SHORES OF LOVE published 1954 by Lesley Blanch**

“There have been many women who have followed the beckoning Eastern star” says [Lesley Blanch](#). She writes about four such women in *The Wilder Shores Of Love* — Isabel Burton (who married the Arabist and explorer Richard), Jane Digby el-Mezrab (Lady Ellenborough, the society beauty who ended up living in the Syrian desert with a Bedouin chieftain), Aimée Dubucq de Rivery (a French convent girl captured by pirates and sent to the Sultan's harem in Istanbul), and Isabelle Eberhardt (a Swiss linguist who felt most comfortable in boy's clothes and lived among the Arabs in the Sahara).

They all escaped from the constraints of nineteenth century Europe and fled to the Middle East, where they found love, fulfillment, and “glowing horizons of emotion and daring”. Blanch’s first, bestselling book, it pioneered a new kind of group biography focusing on women escaping the boredom of convention. During recent travels this classic was re visited. I first read it perhaps 30 years ago and it sent my heart racing and wanting to take off. It still does.

## **POSTCARD from GUJARAT**

### **Why Visit?**

Travelling almost anywhere in India raises the most marvellous paradoxes and conundrums, no less so Gujarat, that has the vast salt marsh to the north bordering the Sindh desert, a long coastline and borders to Rajasthan and Maharashtra, but has roads less travelled by tourists, and many tribal communities who continue traditional lifestyles, despite the pressures of modernity and rapid change and population expansion.

Important to all travel in India is to remain open to the unexpected and the serendipitous. This recent trip was blessed by several instances of good fortune and surprises beyond that which can be planned for.



Whilst staying with the gracious family of Utelia whose wonderful ancestral home is still undergoing restoration after the earthquake, we were able to join members of the usually shy and reticent Jat community who assemble but once a year for four days in the desert to honour their Sufi saint. This was the good luck of timing and the standing with which our host is regarded in this community.

At **Dwarka**, the most western and one of Indian Hinduism's four most holy cardinal points of pilgrimage we were accompanied by our guide, Durga's family priest who presides over records of all the visits made by his family before him. To make darshan at the temple and take prasad was as close as a visitor might get to the holy rituals of a devotee visiting the abodes of the gods, as his family has done generations before him.



The legendary city of *Dvaraka* was the dwelling place of Lord Krishna and modern day Dwarka continues to draw pilgrims from all corners of India bearing a flag that must be blessed at the temple and carried back to their own community.

Throughout **Kutch**, we were introduced to an astounding array of crafts, decoration and arts still practiced at a very high levels of excellence. Indeed at Patan, the Patola Salvi family's young son who had taken an engineering degree and had brothers who had trained respectively as architect and physiotherapist, sat at the looms and spoke of his family's 700 year unbroken record of producing the highly skilled mind-snapping silk double ikat weaving. He spoke of it in devotional terms and gave credence to the idea it would continue even though much now depends on patronage and a willingness to pay princely sums for such superb hand woven and complex cloth.

**Other highlights:**

[The Calico Museum](#) established by the Sarabhai family in Ahmedabad has a priceless treasure. Even though it is managed and run by the most eccentric and bizarre rules, it cannot be missed. For those who like their museums more orderly and who love the world of textiles then [Shreyas Folk Museum](#) is also a must see. Our preferred hotel in Ahmedabad is [The House of Mangaldass](#), an experience without compare. This charming property is still so redolent of the family who created its unique rooms. The suave owner and scion of the illustrious family whose house this was, is also an avid collector of textiles and has plans to renovate the building next door into another branch of the hotel that will boast his personal collection of textiles as decorative themes for the new rooms due to open next year.

Extremely rich in Archeology, Lothal is a well-preserved site of the later Indus Valley Civilisation; the Temples of Somnath, in Junagarh district, Sarkhej Roza, Jhulta Minar and Sidi Sayed Jali in the heart of Ahmedabad (Gujarat's largest city) are wonders of medieval architecture; the Sun Temple in Modhera (90 km north of Ahmedabad) and Rani ni Vav (Stepwells, north of Ahmedabad) are both exquisitely preserved monuments of former kingdoms.