



PACIFIC PEARL

Valli Little takes a little (island) time out to catch up with renowned Aussie chef Shane Watson from Perth's Print Room, who sea-changed to Malolo Island in Fiji to master cooking with tropical produce.

RECIPES VALLI LITTLE & SHANE WATSON PHOTOGRAPHY ALICIA TAYLOR STYLING KIRSTEN JENKINS



Barbecued whole snapper with coconut miti sauce. OPPOSITE: seared tuna with Fijian-style potato curry (recipes p 74).



“The emphasis at Likuliku Lagoon Resort on Fiji’s Malolo island is on rest, relaxation and some very fine food in a tropical setting of peerless beauty and unrivalled luxury.”

THE NAME LIKULIKU means ‘calm waters’, as this part of the Fijian Island of Malolo was once a traditional safe harbour. These days, though, the tranquillity exists in the form of a unique adults-only holiday destination.

Australian executive chef Shane Watson (ex-Print Room, Perth), creates myriad fusion-style dishes at the resort’s restaurant, Fijiana, making the most of local seafood and providing three meals a day overlooking the lagoon. Shane has also helped develop the resort’s kitchen garden where tomatoes and peas grow alongside exotic herbs and spices, and a newly installed apiary has begun to produce honey.

A medicine walk with a local plant doctor revealed the healing powers of native plants, including the coconut-producing palm tree they call the ‘tree of life’ as it provides everything needed to survive: water to drink, oil to cook with, flesh to eat, bark for building fires and wood to build houses. Such a simple philosophy from some of the friendliest people on the planet, and one that has inspired this tropical summer menu.

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Lobster rolls. **OPPOSITE:** prawn & spinach angel hair pasta with prawn oil.

LOBSTER ROLLS
MAKES 6

- 1 (800g) cooked lobster, halved
- 1 celery stalk, finely chopped
- 1 spring onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 small fennel bulb, finely chopped
- 2/3 cup (200g) whole-egg mayonnaise
- 2 tbs tomato sauce
- 2 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tbs lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp Tabasco
- 2 tbs chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 6 small rolls (we used brioche), split lengthways through the top, without cutting all the way through
- Store-bought fries (optional), to serve

Remove meat from the lobster tail and claws, removing the intestinal tract and discarding the shell. Roughly chop the meat and place in a bowl with the celery, onion and fennel, and toss to combine.

Combine mayonnaise, tomato sauce, Worcestershire sauce, lemon juice, Tabasco and parsley in a small bowl. Season, then fold through lobster mixture. Fill rolls with the lobster mixture and serve with fries, if using, to serve.

PRAWN & SPINACH ANGEL HAIR PASTA WITH PRAWN OIL
SERVES 4

- 400g angel hair pasta
- 1kg green prawns, peeled (tails intact), deveined, shells reserved
- 250g cherry tomatoes, halved
- 100g baby spinach leaves
- Micro basil, to serve

PRAWN OIL
1 cup (250ml) olive oil
5 lemon thyme sprigs, leaves picked
4 garlic cloves, bruised
1 each carrot and onion, roughly chopped
1 celery stalk, roughly chopped



VALLI'S KITCHEN DIARY



Vanilla & tropical fruit cheesecake

- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp each fennel and coriander seeds
- 1 tbs tomato paste
- 6 flat-leaf parsley stalks
- 2 basil stalks
- 1 tsp sweet smoked paprika (pimenton)

For the prawn oil, heat 1/2 cup (125ml) oil in a large saucepan over high heat. Add reserved prawn shells, thyme leaves, garlic, vegetables, bay leaves, and fennel and coriander seeds. Cook, stirring, for 5-6 minutes until shells are crisp and dry.

Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring, for 2-3 minutes until slightly darkened and caramelised. Add the parsley, basil stalks and paprika, and stir to combine. Add the remaining 1/2 cup (125ml) oil. Reduce heat to low, and cook, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes or until flavours infuse. Remove from heat and allow to infuse for a further 15 minutes. Strain the oil through a sieve, pressing down on the shells to extract as much oil as possible. Discard solids and set aside.

Cook the pasta in a large saucepan of boiling salted water according to packet instructions. Drain.

Meanwhile, heat 2 tbs prawn oil in a large frypan over medium-high heat. Add the prawns and cook, stirring, for 2-3 minutes until just cooked through. Add tomato and spinach, and cook for a further 1 minute or until tomato is warmed through and spinach is wilted. Add drained pasta to pan with reserved prawn oil. Season and toss to combine.

Divide among serving plates and top with micro basil to serve.

VANILLA & TROPICAL FRUIT CHEESECAKE

SERVES 12

Begin this recipe 1 day ahead.

- 300g shortbread biscuits, finely crushed
- 110g unsalted butter, melted
- 750g cream cheese, at room temperature
- 150ml thickened cream
- 1 vanilla bean, split, seeds scraped
- 2 eggs, plus 8 extra egg yolks
- 1 3/4 cups (385g) caster sugar
- 600g sour cream
- 5 passionfruit, pulp removed
- 1/2 red papaya, peeled, sliced
- 1/2 pineapple, peeled, sliced
- 1 mango, peeled, sliced

Preheat the oven to 160°C. Grease and line the base and sides of a 20cm x 30cm lamington pan with baking paper..

Combine crushed biscuit and butter in a bowl, then press into base of pan. Chill for 30 minutes to set. Bake for 10-15 minutes until pale golden, then remove from oven and allow to cool completely.

Reduce oven to 120°C. Whiz cream cheese, cream, vanilla seeds, eggs, egg yolks and 1 cup (220g) sugar in a food processor until smooth. Pour over the cooled base and return to the oven for 1 hour 15 minutes or until just set.

Wipe food processor clean, then whiz sour cream and 1/4 cup (55g) sugar until smooth. Pour over cheesecake and >>

VALLI'S KITCHEN DIARY.

smooth top. Return to oven and bake for a further 15 minutes or until set. Remove from oven. Set aside to cool, then chill for 4 hours or overnight.

To make passionfruit syrup, place the remaining 1/2 cup (110g) sugar and 200ml water in a pan over low heat, stirring until sugar dissolves. Increase the heat to medium-low and simmer for 8-10 minutes until slightly reduced. Add passionfruit pulp, stirring to break up the membrane. Remove from heat and cool slightly. Chill until ready to serve.

Cut cheesecake into twelve bars. Top each bar with pieces of fruit and drizzle with passionfruit syrup to serve.

SEARED TUNA WITH FIJIAN-STYLE POTATO CURRY

SERVES 4

800g sebago potatoes, peeled, cut into 4cm pieces
2 tbs ghee
1 onion, finely chopped
1 long green chilli, seeds removed, finely chopped, plus extra to serve
2cm piece ginger, grated
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 tsp mild curry powder
1 tsp ground turmeric

3 tsp brown mustard seeds
1/2 tsp chilli powder
10 fresh curry leaves, plus extra fried leaves (optional), to serve
1 1/2 tsp caster sugar
1/3 cup (60ml) rice vinegar
1 red onion, thinly sliced into rounds
4 x 180g tuna steaks
Coriander leaves, to serve

Place potato in a pan of cold salted water, bring to the boil over high heat. Cook for 3-4 minutes until par-cooked. Drain.

Heat the ghee in a frypan with a lid over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring, for 2-3 minutes until softened. Add chilli, ginger, garlic and spices, and cook for a further 1 minute or until fragrant. Add the potatoes, curry leaves and 1 cup (250ml) water. Cover and cook for 10 minutes, shaking to prevent catching, then remove lid and cook for a further 5-10 minutes until potatoes start to crisp. Remove from heat. Stir in 1/2 tsp sugar and season. Keep warm.

Combine the vinegar, 1/2 tsp salt and remaining 1 tsp sugar in a bowl, stirring until dissolved. Add red onion and toss to combine. Set aside.

Heat a chargrill pan or barbecue to high. Season tuna and grill for 1 minute each side or until seared but still rare in the centre.

Remove from pan. Rest, loosely covered with foil, for 5 minutes.

Drain red onion. Add coriander leaves and toss to combine. Season.

Divide tuna and potato curry among plates. Top with onion mixture, extra chilli and fried curry leaves, if using, to serve.

BARBECUED WHOLE SNAPPER WITH COCONUT MITI SAUCE

SERVES 4-6

1.2kg whole snapper, cleaned (ask your fishmonger to do this), skin scored
2 limes
2 banana leaves, washed, dried
Toasted coconut flakes, to serve

COCONUT MITI SAUCE

400ml can coconut cream
1 red onion, sliced
3 long red chillies, seeds removed, thinly sliced
3 vine-ripened tomatoes, seeds removed, chopped
1 bunch coriander, leaves reserved, stalks and roots finely chopped
3cm piece ginger, grated
2 tbs fish sauce
1 tbs brown sugar
Finely grated zest and juice of 2 limes

Season fish, then thinly slice one lime and place in the cavity of the fish, set aside.

For the coconut miti sauce, combine all ingredients, except coriander leaves, in a bowl. Set aside.

Place two large sheets of foil on a work surface and top with banana leaves. Pour one-third miti sauce onto banana leaves, then top with fish. Fold over banana leaf and foil to completely enclose.

Preheat a barbecue to medium-high heat. Place fish parcel on hot plate and cook for 25 minutes or until fish is cooked through. Remove from heat. Set aside to rest, unopened, for 5 minutes.

Open parcel and carefully transfer fish, on banana leaves, to a platter. Halve remaining lime and squeeze juice over fish. Drizzle over remaining miti sauce and serve topped with reserved coriander leaves and toasted coconut flakes. ✂

