

IN SEASON

1 PEACHES

"Peaches just scream summer. The filling for our 'morning hot muffins' (p 18) depends on the season, and peaches and pecans are a summer must!"

At Byron Bay's idyllic Sun Ranch, **Pip Sumbak** combines the freshest local produce and the primal power of fire to create an unforgettable dining experience.

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PEPPERS

"I'm obsessed with peppers. There are so many ways you can use them! My favourite is the sweet Turkish pepper – they grill so beautifully."

3 NECTARINES

"Nectarines are a little firmer than peaches, so they hold together well when you chargrill them. And when you slice off the cheeks, you can use the rest to make a sauce."

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TOMATOES

"One of our neighbouring farms is Coopers Shoot Tomatoes. They produce the best heirloom tomatoes. Byron Bay gets very excited about them."

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Pip Sumbak;
Sun Ranch (right)
is inspired by
1970s Californian
ranch houses

Ever since she can recall, Pip Sumbak has loved cooking with fire. She would invite school friends over to play at her family farm, and cook them lamb chops on a tractor disc plough over a fire.

"I guess I was this weird little girl who liked cooking," Sumbak says with a laugh.

That little girl has since travelled the world, training as a chef in France, Spain, Indonesia and Fiji before returning home to settle in Byron Bay. She's now taken up a place as chef-in-residence at Byron's luxury coastal estate, Sun Ranch. Here, she offers guests unique Fire Feast experiences.

"Cooking with fire – it resonates with everyone," she says. "I've cooked for wealthy people who've experienced the best of the best, and they're still drawn to it. The simplicity of lighting a fire and putting a fish straight from the ocean on that fire and watching it cook."



This experience-based cooking is not just about entertaining people and providing them with delicious charcoal-infused meals. It's also a chance for guests to better connect with their food.

"We're trying to make sustainable food more enticing," Sumbak says. "Like, we've got people supplying local venison and wild boar, and we make sure that's a highlight, and then people can hear the story about them being invasive species. Or using local mullet instead of snapper, because they're in season and they're absolutely delicious. You start small, and it trickles down."

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As the evening draws in, Sun Ranch guests gather at the outdoor dining space to watch dinner get underway. The multi-course Fire Feast begins with snacks before moving on to a full sit-down meal featuring hyperseasonal

fruits and vegetables, local meats and line-caught fish. Then, dessert – perhaps honey dumplings. And all cooked over fire.

"It's a salt-of-the-earth experience," say Sun Ranch co-founders and creative directors Julia Ashwood and Jamie Blakey. "Cooking locally sourced foods over fire takes this back to basics – it's simplistic and raw. There's a lovely romance which comes with cooking in this way which appeals to all the senses."

There's certainly an eternal, universal appeal to fire – perhaps it connects us to our most primal selves. Whatever the reason, the response it elicits from guests never fails to delight Sumbak.

"Sometimes I'm like, why do I keep doing this? I've always got burnt hands," she says. "But I keep coming back, because of that reaction. Watching people who have seen it all, just loving it."

For your own taste of Sun Ranch at home, Sumbak has created this produce-forward menu that heroes the best of summer, with just a hint of that chargrilled magic the chef so loves to share.



PEPPERS

Tuna sashimi with charred sweet peppers and dashi dressing (p 18)

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TOMATOES

Roasted & fresh tomatoes
with sourdough



NECTARINES

Nectarine, radish & summer
herb salad with ginger juice
vinaigrette



NECTARINE, RADISH & SUMMER HERB SALAD WITH GINGER JUICE VINAIGRETTE

SERVES 4

"The perfect nectarine is super sweet, but firm enough to season and grill lightly, like a vegetable. This salad is sweet, zesty, crunchy and the perfect way to use a mix of herbs from our ranch garden."

- 250g watermelon radish (or any variety of radish), thinly sliced on a mandoline
- 2 banana shallots, thinly sliced
- 8 (1kg total) ripe but firm nectarines, halved, stones removed
- 1 tsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 bunch coriander, leaves picked
- 1/4 bunch Thai basil, leaves picked

DRESSING

- 1 tbs grated palm sugar
- 1 garlic clove
- 3 tsp dried shrimp
- 6 makrut lime leaves, stems removed, leaves finely chopped
- 2 tbs ginger juice (see notes)
- 1 tbs each lime juice and fish sauce
- 1 tsp sesame oil

Place the radish and shallot in a large bowl of iced water.

For the dressing, place the grated palm sugar, garlic, dried shrimp, makrut lime leaves and 1/2 tsp salt flakes in a mortar and use a pestle to grind until a paste. Transfer to a small bowl. Add the ginger and lime juices, fish sauce and oil, and stir until well combined. Set aside for 30 minutes for flavours to meld.

Heat a barbecue chargrill plate or chargrill pan to high. Brush nectarines with a little oil and season with salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper. Cook, cut-side down, for 3 minutes until charred, then transfer to a shallow serving dish.

Drain and spin-dry radish and shallot (or pat dry in a clean tea towel) then arrange over charred nectarines. Pour over dressing and serve sprinkled with herbs.

NOTES: For the ginger juice, peel and finely grate 50-80g ginger (you'll need

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less if your ginger is younger and juicier). Squeeze grated ginger through a fine sieve placed over a bowl to catch juice. Keep herb stems to make stocks or broths.

ROASTED & FRESH TOMATOES WITH SOURDOUGH

SERVES 8 (AS A STARTER OR SHARED PLATE)

"Our neighbours (Coopers Shoot Tomatoes) grow some of the best tomatoes in Australia. This dish can be served in so many ways – with stracciatella, a tin of anchovies or simply mixed through pasta. For this recipe, it works a treat with toasted or fresh sourdough and fresh basil."

- 750g mixed baby tomatoes
- 1/3 cup (80ml) extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tbs sherry vinegar (we used Pedro Ximenez)
- 1 garlic bulb, top trimmed
- 1 tsp runny honey
- 1/2 bunch thyme
- 1 young tip rosemary
- 1 bunch basil, leaves picked, stems reserved
- 250g assorted heirloom tomatoes, sliced
- Chargrilled sliced sourdough, to serve

Place the cherry tomatoes, oil, vinegar, garlic, honey, thyme, rosemary, half the basil and all the stems in a baking dish. Season with a pinch of salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper and toss to combine. Place in a cold oven and heat to 160°C/140°C fan-forced. Roast for 1 hour or until bubbly and the garlic bulb is soft. Remove and discard herb stems:

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Set garlic bulb aside and, when cool enough to handle, squeeze out garlic from the cloves and finely chopped the flesh. Stir garlic flesh through roasted tomatoes.

To serve, spoon warm roasted tomatoes over chargilled sourdough, then place fresh tomato slices over the top and rip over some fresh basil leaves. Season with salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper and drizzle with a little oil from the roasted tomatoes.

TUNA SASHIMI WITH CHARRED PEPPERS AND DASHI DRESSING SERVES 4

"I've worked in Fiji on and off for many years, and can't get past my love for a buttery slab of yellowfin tuna. We have access to great seafood in the Northern Rivers, and this dish works well with a variety of fish."

- 200g sashimi-grade tuna, cut into 1cm pieces
- 400g mixed green peppers (we used poblano and padron)
- 2 Lebanese cucumbers, thinly sliced lengthways (we used a mandoline)
- 1 large ripe firm avocado, halved, sliced widthways
- 2 tbs furikake (Japanese rice seasoning, from Asian grocers)
- Shiso leaves (also known as perilla, from Asian grocers), to serve



DRESSING

- 2 x 2g sachets *katsuobushi* (dried, smoked bonito flakes, from Asian grocers)
- 2½ tbs rice wine vinegar
- 2 tbs mirin
- 3 tsp kombu dashi (Japanese seaweed seasoning, from Asian grocers)
- 2 tsp white sugar

Place the tuna in a bowl over another bowl of ice in the fridge to keep cold.

Heat a barbecue grill to high. Grill the peppers until skins are blistered, then place in a bowl and stand, covered with a plate, for 10 minutes. Discard stems, seeds and skin, then cut flesh into large strips.

For the dressing, whisk all ingredients in a small bowl until sugar and seasoning have dissolved.

When ready to serve, combine tuna, peppers, cucumber, avocado and dressing in a serving dish and gently toss to coat. Sprinkle with furikake and shiso leaves.

PEACH & PECAN 'MORNING HOT MUFFINS'

MAKES 6

"At the ranch, our guests have a 'morning hot muffin' delivered to their doorstep as the sun rises, to enjoy with coffee. It's a warm little gesture that makes the ranch feel like home, so you can sit in bed with your muffin and your coffee and enjoy the view. Serve this butter with anything. In fact, make triple the amount and keep some in your fridge for every occasion." You'll need a 6-hole, 1-cup (250ml) capacity muffin pan.

- 3½ cups (560g) wholemeal plain flour
- 3 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp each ground ginger and ground cinnamon
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1½ cups (375ml) milk
- 1 cup (250ml) canola or vegetable oil
- 220g brown sugar
- 1 (240g) large peach, halved, stone removed, finely chopped
- 100g pecans, roughly chopped

'CRACK' BROWN BUTTER (MAKES 250G)

- 250g unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 2 tsp salt flakes (or to taste)
- 1 tsp runny honey

For the butter, place half the butter in a medium frypan and cook over medium heat for 5 minutes or until nut brown and fragrant. Set aside to cool in a large bowl, making sure to add in all the brown toasty bits from the pan.

When the brown butter starts to solidify again, add the remaining butter, the salt and honey and whisk until well combined, light and fluffy. Transfer to a piece of plastic wrap and roll up in a log, twisting at the ends to secure. Keep chilled until ready to serve.

Preheat oven to 200°C/180°C fan-forced. Line a 6-hole, 1-cup (250ml) capacity muffin pan with paper cases.

Whisk the flour, baking powder, spices and a large pinch of fine salt in a large bowl until well combined. Whisk the eggs, milk, oil and sugar in a medium bowl until well combined.

Add the egg mixture to the flour mixture and stir until just combined, but do not overmix. Fold through the peach and most of the pecans, reserving 2 tbs pecans, until just combined. Divide batter evenly among prepared paper cases, piling the mixture up high. Sprinkle tops with reserved pecans.

Bake for 30 minutes or until cooked when a skewer inserted in centre comes out clean, and tops are golden. Cool in pan for 3 minutes, then transfer muffins to a wire rack to cool for a further 5 minutes. Serve warm with brown butter.



PEACHES

Peach & pecan 'morning
hot muffins'