

## *This other Eden*

Tucked among jurassic tree ferns on the banks of the Waikato River, Huka Lodge on New Zealand's North Island is the ideal food-lover's getaway, and the inspiration for this month's autumn entertaining special.

valli's autumn entertaining.



Beetroot dip with cheese straws

These produce-driven entertaining menus are inspired by the natural bounty at Huka Lodge.

OUR AUTUMN ENTERTAINING feature is designed to help you cook for friends and family, whether you're gathering at home, or heading away for the holidays. New Zealand's famed Huka Lodge was our stunning backdrop this year, with its idyllic setting on the banks of the mighty Waikato River. Huka's British-born executive chef Paul Froggat, whose resumé is sprinkled with Michelin stars, showed us the best local produce, the inspiration for these recipes. If you're planning an escape to Huka Lodge there's no need to step into the kitchen, however, you'll be well looked after by Paul along with the line-up of guest chefs including Guy Grossi, Martin Benn and Stefano Manfredi. With thanks to New Zealand Tourism ([newzealand.com.au](http://newzealand.com.au)) and Huka Lodge ([hukalodge.co.nz](http://hukalodge.co.nz)) for their assistance.

## LUNCH MENU

*Beetroot dip with  
cheese straws*

~

*Smoked trout &  
blackberry fattoush*

~

*Smoked lamb racks with  
caramelised pear salad*

~

*Salt-crust potatoes*

~

*Carrot cake with carrot  
& pecan ice cream*

### beetroot dip with cheese straws

Serves 6

300ml thickened cream  
2 titanium-strength gelatine leaves\*  
(see Shopping list, p 64)  
500g cooked beetroot\*  
(see Shopping list, p 64)  
1 tsp honey  
Finely grated zest and juice of 1 lime  
1/2 tsp chilli flakes  
200g creme fraiche  
2 tbs chopped dill,  
plus extra sprigs to serve  
Cheese straws (recipe follows), to serve

Place the cream in a saucepan over medium heat and bring to a simmer.

Meanwhile, soak gelatine leaves in cold water for 5 minutes to soften. Squeeze excess water from gelatine, then stir into hot cream until melted and combined. Remove from heat and set aside.

Whiz the beetroot and honey in a food processor to a coarse paste. With the motor running, slowly add the cream mixture and whiz until smooth. Add lime juice and chilli, then whiz to combine. Season, then divide mixture among six 200ml serving glasses. Cover and chill for 2-3 hours until a soft set.

Combine creme fraiche, lime zest and dill in a bowl. Chill until ready to serve.

Dollop creme fraiche into glasses, top with dill and serve with cheese straws.

### cheese straws

Makes 20

2 sheets frozen butter puff pastry,  
thawed

1 egg, lightly beaten

1 1/4 cups (100g) grated pecorino  
or parmesan

Nigella seeds or poppy seeds  
and sesame seeds, to scatter

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper.

Cut pastry into 1cm strips, then lay on prepared tray. Brush pastry with egg and sprinkle over cheese and seeds. Bake for 12-15 minutes until puffed and golden.

RECIPES VALLI LITTLE PHOTOGRAPHY BRETT STEVENS STYLING DAVID MORGAN  
SHOT ON LOCATION AT HUKA LODGE (HUKALODGE.CO.NZ).  
Grey tablecloth and napkins (used throughout) from Ondene (Double Bay NSW, ondene.com).



Smoked trout & blackberry fattoush

valli's autumn entertaining.



Salt-crust potatoes

### salt-crust potatoes

Makes 6

6 eggwhites  
150g fine cooking salt  
3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cups (500g) plain flour  
6 potatoes (pontiac or desiree), scrubbed  
Butter or herb butter, to serve

Preheat the oven to 180°C.

Combine eggwhite, salt, flour and 100ml water in a bowl and mix to form a dough. Divide into 6 pieces and roll out each piece on a lightly floured surface. Place a potato in the centre of each piece and roll to enclose completely in the dough. Place on a baking tray and bake for 1 hour. Remove from oven, cool slightly, then crack open, discarding crust, and serve with butter.

### smoked lamb racks with caramelised pear salad

Serves 4-6

1/2 cup (100g) long grain rice  
50g loose-leaf lapsang souchong tea\*  
(see Shopping list, p 64)  
1 tbs light brown sugar  
2 x 6-cutlet French-trimmed lamb racks  
1 red onion, cut into thick wedges  
2 pears, cored, cut into wedges  
2 tbs each olive oil and honey  
150g mixed salad leaves (mesclun)  
Balsamic vinegar, to drizzle

Preheat the oven to 150°C. Line a roasting pan with four layers of foil. Combine rice,

### smoked trout & blackberry fattoush

Serves 4-6

200g Puy-style lentils\* (see Shopping list, p 64) or small brown lentils  
1 large pita bread  
100ml olive oil, plus extra to brush  
1 tbs sumac  
300g fresh or frozen, thawed blackberries  
Juice of 1 lemon  
2 tsp honey  
300g whole smoked rainbow trout, skin and bones removed, flaked  
1 telegraph cucumber, sliced  
1 red endive, leaves torn  
1 red onion, thinly sliced  
1/2 cup chopped mint leaves  
2 cups picked watercress leaves  
150g soft goat's cheese, crumbled  
Micro cress\* (optional – see Shopping list, p 64), to serve

Preheat the oven to 170°C.

Place the lentils in a saucepan with 3 cups (750ml) water and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook for 20-25 minutes until tender. Drain and set aside to cool.

Meanwhile, brush the pita with a little olive oil and dust with half the sumac. Cut into triangles, then place on a baking tray and bake for 5-6 minutes until golden and crisp. Remove the pita from the oven, transfer to a wire rack and set aside to cool completely.

Crush half the blackberries with the lemon juice and honey. Season, then add the olive oil and whisk to combine. Set the dressing aside.

Combine the lentils, pita chips, trout, cucumber, endive, onion, mint, watercress sprigs and remaining blackberries in a bowl. Drizzle with dressing, scatter with goat's cheese, micro cress, if using, and remaining 2 tsp sumac, then serve.





Smoked lamb racks with caramelised pear salad

tea and sugar, then spread over foil. Sit a wire rack over foil and place lamb on top. Cover pan with 2 sheets of foil, sealing well. Place over low heat and smoke lamb for 10-15 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine onion, pear and 1 tbs oil in a separate roasting pan.

Transfer lamb to pan with onion, then drizzle with honey. Roast for 20-25 minutes for medium-rare or until cooked to your liking. Remove lamb from pan and rest, loosely covered with foil, for 5 minutes.

Return pan to oven and bake onion and pear for a further 5 minutes or until golden.

Slice lamb. Toss onion and pear with salad leaves and drizzle with vinegar and remaining 1 tbs oil, then serve with lamb.

### carrot cake

Serves 6-8

3 eggs  
175ml sunflower oil

180g brown sugar  
3 carrots, finely grated  
Finely grated zest of 1 orange  
180g self-raising flour  
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda  
1 tsp ground cinnamon  
1/2 tsp grated nutmeg  
1/2 cup (50g) walnuts, toasted, chopped  
Carrot and pecan ice cream (recipe follows), to serve

### Candied carrot

1 cup (220g) caster sugar  
2 carrots, peeled, finely shredded

Preheat oven to 180°C. Grease and line the base and sides of a 23cm cake pan.

Combine the eggs, oil and sugar in a bowl and beat to combine. Stir in the carrot and orange zest. Sift in the dry ingredients, then add the walnut and stir gently to combine. Pour batter into the pan and bake for 35-40 minutes until a

skewer comes out clean. Allow to cool slightly, then turn out onto a wire rack to cool completely.

Meanwhile, for the candied carrot, place sugar in a small saucepan with 1 cup (250ml) water and bring to the boil over high heat, stirring until sugar dissolves. Add carrot and cook for 5 minutes or until just tender. Remove carrot from pan and transfer to a bowl. Cook syrup for a further 10 minutes or until reduced. Pour syrup over the carrot and set aside to cool.

Garnish cake with candied carrot and serve with carrot and pecan ice cream.

### carrot & pecan ice cream

Makes about 1L

600ml pure (thin) cream  
150ml milk  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
180g caster sugar  
5 egg yolks  
125g grated carrot, squeezed to remove excess liquid, steamed for 5 minutes  
2/3 cup (90g) chopped pecans, toasted  
1 tsp ground cinnamon  
1/2 tsp each nutmeg and ground ginger

Pour cream, milk, vanilla and half the sugar into a saucepan over medium-low heat. Whisk egg yolks and remaining 90g sugar until thick and pale. As soon as cream mixture starts to bubble around the edge, pour it into the yolk mixture, whisking constantly. Return to pan and place over low heat. Stir with a wooden spoon for 3 minutes or until slightly thickened and smooth. Remove from heat and cool. Fold in carrot, pecans and spices. Chill until cool.

Transfer to an ice cream machine and churn according to manufacturer's instructions. (Alternatively, pour into a shallow container and freeze for 2 hours or until frozen at edges. Remove from freezer and beat with electric beaters. Return to container and refreeze. Repeat 2 or 3 times.) Transfer to a container and freeze for 4 hours or until firm, then serve.



valli's autumn entertaining.

Carrot cake with carrot & pecan ice cream



## DINNER MENU

*Pickled wild mushroom  
bruschetta*

*Pumpkin soup with  
caramelised onion*

*Venison fillet with cherry crumbs*

*Wilted spinach; celeriac mash*

*Apple & berry pies  
with homemade custard*

### pickled wild mushroom bruschetta

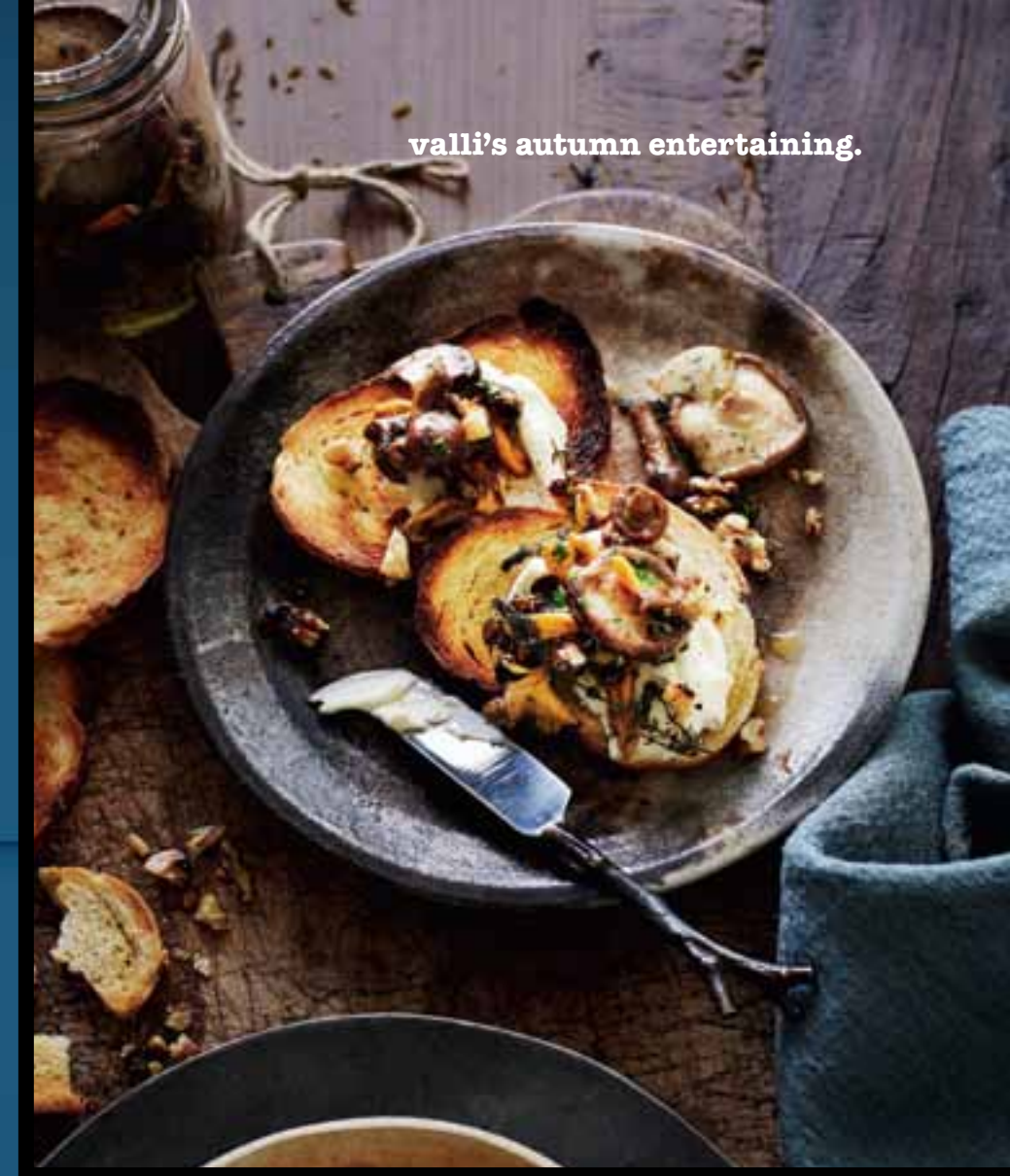
**Serves 4-6**

1/2 cup (125ml) olive oil  
200g mixed wild mushrooms (such  
as chanterelle, oyster and pine,  
sliced if large)  
2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced  
1 tsp coriander seeds, toasted, crushed  
2 tbs walnut oil\*  
(see Shopping list, p 64)  
1 tsp caster sugar  
1 tbs red wine vinegar  
4 thyme sprigs  
2 bay leaves  
Soft goat's cheese, toasted sourdough,  
chopped flat-leaf parsley and toasted  
walnuts or hazelnuts, to serve

Heat 1 tbs oil in a large frypan over  
high heat. Add the mushrooms and cook,  
stirring, for 2-3 minutes until starting to  
wilt. Add the garlic and cook for a further  
1 minute, then add coriander seeds, nut  
oil, sugar, vinegar, herbs and remaining  
100ml olive oil. Warm gently then remove  
from the heat. Transfer to a serving bowl  
and set aside for 1 hour to marinate.

Spread goat's cheese on toasted  
sourdough, top with mushrooms and  
scatter with parsley and toasted nuts.

valli's autumn entertaining.



valli's autumn entertaining.



Pumpkin soup with caramelised onion.  
Opposite: venison fillet with cherry crums, wilted spinach and celeriac mash.



### pumpkin soup with caramelised onion

**Serves 6**

Caramelised onions will keep in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

- 1/4 cup (60ml) olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 leek (pale part only), chopped
- 1kg pumpkin, peeled, chopped
- 1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
- 3 cups (750ml) chicken stock
- 300ml thickened cream

#### Caramelised onion

- 1 tbs olive oil
- 1/4 cup (60ml) balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 cup (60g) brown sugar
- 3 red onions, thinly sliced

For the onion, place all ingredients in a saucepan over medium-high heat with 1 cup (250ml) water. Bring to a simmer, then reduce heat to low. Cover and cook for 35-40 minutes until reduced. Uncover and cook for 3-4 minutes until caramelised. Remove from heat and set aside.

Meanwhile, heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and leek, and cook for 3-4 minutes until soft. Add pumpkin and cook for 3-4 minutes until soft. Season and add nutmeg and stock, then bring to the boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook for 15-20 minutes



until pumpkin is tender. Cool slightly, then whiz in a blender until smooth. Return to pan, then stir in half the cream and gently reheat. Serve soup topped with remaining cream and caramelised onions.

### venison fillet with cherry crums

**Serves 4**

- 2 tbs olive oil
- 1kg venison fillet\* (see Shopping list, p 64)
- 150ml red wine
- 1/4 cup (60ml) port
- Pared zest of 1 orange
- 6 juniper berries\* (see Shopping list, p 64), lightly crushed
- 4 thyme sprigs
- 2 cups (500ml) veal or beef demi-glace\* (see Shopping list, p 64)

- 670g jar pitted morello cherries, drained
- 15g dark chocolate, chopped
- Wilted spinach and celeriac mash (recipes follow), to serve

#### Cherry crums

- 100g fresh sourdough breadcrumbs
- 1/2 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 2 tsp fresh thyme leaves
- 75g dried cherries
- 1 garlic clove
- 60g unsalted butter

Preheat the oven to 180°C.

Heat the oil in a frypan over high heat. Season venison and cook, turning, for 2-4 minutes until browned. Transfer to a baking tray and roast for 8 minutes for rare or until cooked to your liking. Rest, loosely covered, for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, for the crumbs, place breadcrumbs, herbs, dried cherry and garlic in a food processor and whiz until coarse crumbs. Melt butter in a frypan over medium heat. Cook crumbs, stirring, for 5 minutes or until crisp. Remove crumbs from pan and set aside.

Return pan to medium-high heat. Add wine, port, zest, juniper and thyme and bring to a simmer. Cook for 3-4 minutes until reduced by half. Add demi-glace and cherries, and cook for 5 minutes or until smooth and glossy. Stir in chocolate until melted, the season and remove sauce from heat.

Slice venison and serve with red wine sauce, cherry crumb, spinach and mash.

**wilted spinach**

**Serves 6 as a side**

- 1 tbs olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 400g baby spinach leaves, washed
- 20g unsalted butter

Heat oil in a large frypan over medium heat. Add garlic and cook for 1 minute or until fragrant. Add spinach cook for 1-2 minutes until wilted. Season, then stir in the butter and serve.

**celeriac mash**

**Serves 6 as a side**

- 500g potatoes (pontiac or desiree)
- 1 large celeriac\* (see Shopping list), peeled, chopped
- 1 garlic clove
- 1/3 cup (80ml) thickened cream
- 50g unsalted butter
- 1/2 tsp ground nutmeg

Place potato, celeriac and garlic in a saucepan of cold, salted water. Bring to the boil, then simmer for 15-20 minutes until tender. Drain and return to pan. Heat gently, stirring, for 30 seconds to remove excess water. Pass through a potato ricer or mash until smooth. Add cream, butter and nutmeg, season and stir until smooth.

**apple & berry pies with homemade custard**

**Makes 4**

- 1 2/3 cups (250g) plain flour
- 1/4 cup (35g) icing sugar
- 140g chilled unsalted butter, chopped
- 1 egg, lightly beaten, plus 1 egg yolk

**Apple & berry filling**

- 250g frozen mixed berries
- 2 tsp lemon juice
- 2 large Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, thinly sliced
- 1/3 firmly packed cup (80g) brown sugar

**Custard**

- 600ml milk
- 100ml pure (thin) cream
- 1 vanilla bean, split, seeds scraped
- 4 egg yolks
- 60g caster sugar
- 2 tsp cornflour

Whiz flour, icing sugar and butter in a food processor until fine crumbs. Add egg yolk and 1/4 cup (60ml) cold water, then whiz until a smooth ball forms. Enclose in plastic wrap and chill for 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 190°C. Grease and line a baking tray with baking paper.

For the filling, combine berries, lemon juice, apple and sugar in a bowl. Set aside.

Divide dough into four and roll out each piece on a lightly floured surface into a 15cm circle. Transfer to baking tray and place a handful of filling in the centre of each pastry round, leaving a 3cm border. Fold over pastry edge to enclose filling, pressing down lightly with your fingers to seal. Brush pastry with beaten egg and bake for 20-30 minutes until golden.

Meanwhile, for the custard, place milk, cream, vanilla pod and seeds into a pan over medium heat. Whisk egg yolks, sugar and cornflour together until smooth. As soon as milk mixture starts to bubble, pour it into egg yolk mixture, whisking constantly. Return to pan and place over low heat. Stir with a wooden spoon for 3-4 minutes until thickened and smooth.

Serve pies with warm custard. **d.**



*Shopping list*

**THE ASIAN GROCER**

**Lapsang souchong**, Chinese black tea that has a strong smoky flavour.

**THE BUTCHER**

**Demi-glace**, a rich French sauce made from reduced veal or beef stock.

**Venison**, order ahead.

**THE DELI & GOURMET SHOP**

**Gelatine leaves**, check packet for setting instructions.

**Juniper berries**, savoury berries with a bitter flavour.

**Puy-style lentils**, also called French-style, a small nutty lentil that hold their shape when cooked.

**Walnut oil**, keep in the fridge.

**THE GREENGROCER**

**Celeriac**, a root vegetable that's available in the cooler months.

**Cooked beetroots**, available in vacuum packs.

**Micro cress**, available in punnets.



Apple & berry pies with homemade custard