

FOOD INSPIRED BY NATURE  
**PETER GILMORE**

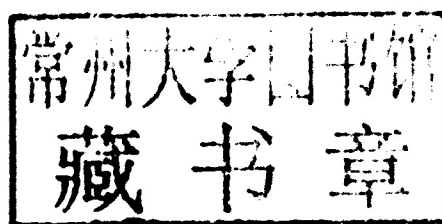
# QUAY





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IMPORTANT: Those who might be at risk from the effects of salmonella poisoning (the elderly, pregnant women, young children and those suffering from immune deficiency diseases) should consult their doctor with any concerns about eating raw eggs.

OVEN GUIDE: You may find cooking times vary depending on the oven you are using. We have used a fan-forced oven for these recipes. As a general rule, increase the oven temperature by 20°C (35°F) if using a conventional oven.

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I would like to dedicate this book to my family.

To my wife Keith, whose support over the years has been unwavering, and to my beautiful sons, Isaac and Joseph. To my parents, Dawn and John Gilmore, and my sisters, Nicole and Michelle.

I was inspired to cook from an early age by my mum. Her passion for cooking and her enjoyment of sharing good food lit a spark that led me on my path. Both my parents are creative and instilled in me an appreciation of craftsmanship and quality. Because of the love and support of my family, I am able to do what I do.

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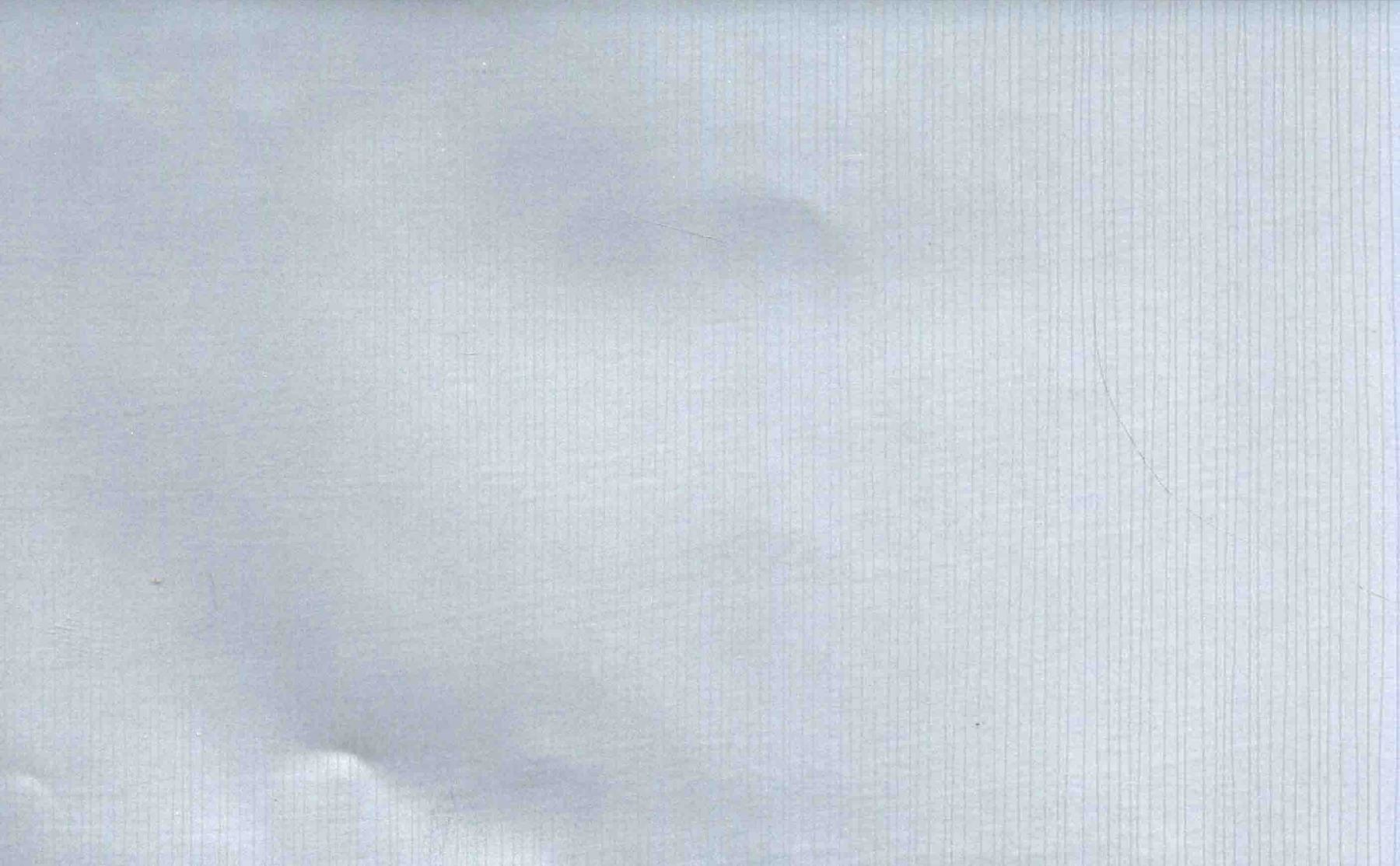
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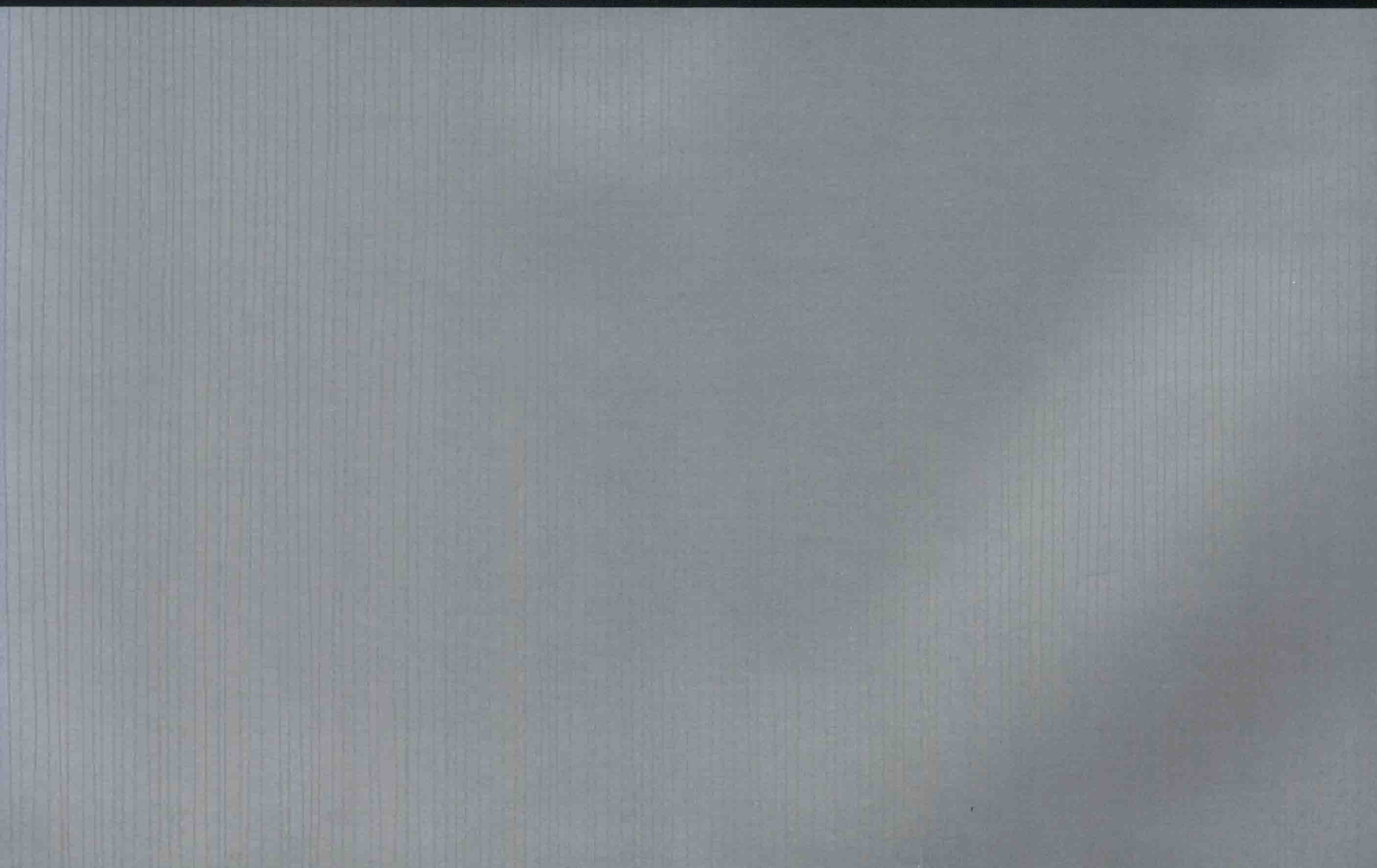












# nature-based cuisine

I am inspired by nature and have coined the term 'nature-based cuisine' to describe my food. Nature offers us so much diversity — a natural elegance and beauty — and it is the organic nature of food, its textures and flavours that is at the heart of my cooking.

I have been growing vegetables in my home garden for the past seven years and it has changed the way I cook. Reconnecting with nature in this way has given me a better understanding of the life cycle of plants and an awareness of each stage of growth — from the first tiny seedlings and shoots, to the flowers, leaves, fruit and seed pods — all of which I incorporate in my cooking. The seasons, too, present an astonishing array of fruit and vegetables, and my passion for rare or unusual heirloom vegetables has given me access to a wonderful variety of boutique food crops. Nature has provided me with a large palette to work from and, in turn, my presentation has become far more organic in an attempt to represent the natural world.

There are pioneers of this style of cooking, and one of the chefs I most respect is Frenchman Michel Bras, who really developed a close bond with his environment and the natural world, and celebrates the diversity of the vegetable garden in his food. Other contemporaries of this style are people such as Andoni Luis Aduriz, from Mugaritz in Spain, and René Redzepi, from Noma in Denmark.

Another major influence on my style is Japanese cuisine, with its deep connection to nature, respect for the seasons, traditions and overall search for perfection through its presentation, harmony and sense of balance.

What I aim to achieve with my food is a balance that takes into consideration a number of things: the texture of ingredients, mouthfeel, harmony of flavours, and the overall elegance of the visual presentation and proportions. All of these elements need to fit together for the dish to work; this is my creative process.

Texture for me is just as important as flavour, and is such an exciting element in cuisine. When you think about the food that you eat, it is often the texture of the food that you crave — the crispness of an apple, the silkiness of custard or the slipperiness of noodles. What has the most impact, the flavour of ice cream or its texture? It is often the texture of a dessert that really makes an impact — not to say that flavour isn't important. The textural component is a natural part of all ingredients but can be enhanced or altered by different cooking methods. Slicing abalone paper-thin, then briefly sautéing it will give you a totally different texture than braising it whole for six hours, then slicing

it thickly. The addition of butter and cream to puréed vegetables drastically changes the texture and mouthfeel.

When considering harmony of flavour, a good place to start is to look at classic flavour matches, such as tomato and basil; lamb, garlic and rosemary; mussels and saffron; and strawberries and cream. These combinations, and hundreds more, work for varying reasons. Sometimes it's juxtaposition, sometimes it's a similarity of flavour nuances building on each other, and sometimes it's purely mysterious as to why some ingredients seem to work so well together.

## my journey

It was my mother's passion for cooking that inspired me to be a chef. She was taught how to cook Italian food by Mrs Timeus, the mother of her best girlfriend Luisa, in the early 1960s. Mum also attended Margaret Fulton's cooking classes in the city during the early 1970s, and I would often accompany her as a toddler.

My career as a chef started at age 15 when I did work experience at a restaurant called the Manor House in Balmain. The chef was Jeffrey Almore. He recognised my passion for cooking and, in 1984, when I was 16, offered me the opportunity to start my apprenticeship. I didn't hesitate; I left school and worked for the first three years at the Manor House, starting on bread and salads and washing up. At that time the Manor House was Sydney's big night out dining experience. It opened the door for me to the restaurant industry and it has a special place in my heart as it was where I met my future wife, Kath.

At 19 I left Sydney for Europe. I worked at numerous places in London and in the West Country of England in a country house called Bishopstrow. It was there that I was exposed to some incredible ingredients — wild mushrooms and foie gras from France, Scottish partridge, wild salmon, venison, hare and numerous wonderful vegetables and cheeses. It was the late 1980s, early 1990s, and the kitchen was creative and dynamic and full of enthusiasm for good food.

The three years travelling through Europe and working in the United Kingdom really opened my mind to the possibilities of cuisine. I returned to



Australia and worked in a small guesthouse in the Blue Mountains. It was my first head chef position, and there was just myself and an apprentice in the kitchen, with a dining room that served up to 40 people. I stayed there for three years to concentrate on developing my own style of cooking. This was an invaluable period of my early cooking career. I followed this with a couple of years cooking around Sydney and started my own dessert business with Kath but I missed the buzz of the kitchen and needed to be cooking and creating in a restaurant environment.

At the beginning of 1999 I took on the head chef's role at De Beers restaurant at Whale Beach on Sydney's northern beaches. The brief was to turn it into a standard-setting fine dining restaurant. Within the first year I received a positive review by *The Sydney Morning Herald's* food critic, Terry Durack, who wrote, 'De Beers houses a young chef with a real talent for sending out beautifully structured food with innate simplicity'. This was my first major review and it was followed by a chef's hat in the 2001 edition of *The Sydney Morning Herald Good Food Guide*. The following year I achieved two chef's hats for my work at De Beers. By this stage, however, De Beers had been put on the market and I decided it was time to look for a new position.

### a meeting of great minds

I approached Leon Fink, the owner of Quay restaurant. Leon had developed the restaurant back in 1988 with Tony Bilson, and it wasn't long before it became known as not only a restaurant in a stunning position — right on Sydney harbour — but also as one of Australia's best restaurants, receiving many accolades. This is due in no small part to Leon, who has great passion and an unwavering commitment to the restaurant and the restaurant industry at large. Quay was the restaurant and Leon the restaurateur I really wanted to work with. I expressed this to Leon and a fruitful collaboration was born.

Leon works on instinct and had a gut feeling that I might be right for the position. He had secretly sent trusted friends and family to De Beers to sample my food and asked them to report back on their experience. When these reports came back very positively, he called me for a series of

interviews and then decided to take a chance on me. I was young and relatively unknown in the Sydney dining scene. Within 12 months, Leon was rewarded with three chef's hats by *The Sydney Morning Herald Good Food Guide* and, for the first time in its history, Quay was awarded Restaurant of the Year in 2003. The chance Leon gave me to take on this role is something I will always be grateful for. I have been at Quay for nine years now and during this time we have maintained our three-hat status. We have also received a total of four *Sydney Morning Herald Good Food Guide* Restaurant of the Year awards.

In 2009 and 2010 we also received the *Australian Gourmet Traveller* Restaurant of the Year award and have retained our three-star rating in their guide book since 2003. In 2010 Quay was awarded 27th place in the S.Pellegrino World's 50 Best Restaurants, and was named the best restaurant in Australasia.

### freedom in cooking

One of the greatest challenges for a cook is to experiment with new combinations to see what works, to develop a good palate, and to coax out and preserve the natural flavour of ingredients. Then there is the balancing act; sometimes you want to intensify the flavour through the cooking process and sometimes you want to minimise the strength of an ingredient through blending it, for the purpose of subtlety.

The freedom of cooking in Australia is that we are not bound by tradition or a set of fixed ideas of how an ingredient should be cooked, what it goes with and how it should be served. This is a double-edged sword of course, as there are many chefs who combine ingredients that should never go together, or try to force cultures and traditions together, or just throw an exotic ingredient into a classical dish to see what happens. This gave rise to the saying 'fusion confusion', but in the right hands this freedom is very powerful and exciting. We have to remember that when new ingredients are introduced into an established cuisine there is, of course, a lot of trial and error — who could imagine Italian cuisine without tomatoes, or Thai

cuisine without the chilli, yet 500 years ago these ingredients didn't exist in these countries.

Today, when we have an almost unlimited range of ingredients and are open to so many culinary influences, it is essential that a modern chef works with a real sense of balance and harmony and an understanding and respect for cultural traditions, but with an open mind, imagination, inquisitiveness and intuition. Classic recipes and techniques are essential to modern cuisine — without these marvellous traditions we would have no platform to work from. In Australia we are lucky to have had pioneering chefs with multicultural backgrounds who have pushed the boundaries and educated a dining public.

## pleasures of the table

I think a great dining experience is finding a perfect balance of excitement, refinement, professionalism and warmth. Experiencing an original cuisine that reflects the passions of the chef is truly inspiring. The idea of coming to a great restaurant and sitting at a table with beautifully starched white linen and the anticipation of the experience that is to come is one of life's great pleasures. It is about nourishing yourself and delighting your palate and evoking all your senses. I believe fine dining is really an art form and, like all art, you bring your own experiences, prejudices, beliefs and culture to the table. How you interpret what you experience is very individual. My wish is that people bring an open mind and heart to the table.

Dining is about indulgence and being pampered. Good service should be professional, knowledgeable, attentive and intuitive but above all should be welcoming, honest and caring. Of course, your own frame of mind and openness will have an influence on your restaurant experience — you should go to a great restaurant to enjoy the art of what that restaurant has to offer. One of the things you should remember and expect is that the waiters and particularly the sommeliers will have an intimate knowledge of the food and wine that is being served. Communication with the sommelier about the dishes you have selected and compatible wine matches is a service of any good restaurant that should be utilised and should greatly enhance your overall dining experience.

In 2008 I changed the structure of the Quay menu from a traditional three-course à la carte menu to a four-course menu containing three savoury courses and one dessert course, with a choice of four to five dishes in each course. I did this for a variety of reasons. Firstly I found that the main course was too protein dominant. I wanted to include a greater proportion of vegetables in my dishes. Also, to give diners an extra course gave them more variety. We also offer a set eight-course tasting menu.

I think part of a great dining experience is remembering the detail of the dishes you have eaten... a taste memory. An incredible meal can stay in one's memory for a lifetime. The greatest compliment for any chef is when a diner says 'that dish is the best thing I have ever eaten'.

## the book

Many of the recipes in this book are quite complex and are comprised of many stages or are made up of smaller recipes, which are then assembled to make the whole. It is important to read the entire recipe through before beginning, as some recipes require marinating overnight or freezing for a few hours, and some require specialised equipment. Some recipes can be broken down into easily achievable components that can be prepared in advance so the final assembly stage isn't overwhelming, or you can take individual components from my dishes and utilise them however you like.

I hope this book gives you inspiration and some insight into my philosophy and shares with you my joy and passion for nature.

**Peter Gilmore**



# foreword

## thomas keller, the french laundry

In September 2006, I went on my first trip to Australia. I took several chefs from my team with me to Sydney, including Corey Lee, then the chef de cuisine at The French Laundry, and Mark Hopper, our executive chef at Bouchon, for the Starlight Children's Foundation hosted by my colleague and friend, Neil Perry. During my visit, we all went to Quay restaurant, along with another good friend, Heston Blumenthal. It was the perfect time to relax and unwind after a whirlwind of events. We came for a late lunch and were immediately struck by the views of Sydney harbour surrounding the restaurant. But the bigger surprise came later at the table.

Everything was amazing. The flavour profiles chef Peter Gilmore presented were exquisite and incredibly focussed. I distinctly remember tasting his version of congee, the classic Chinese rice porridge dish. His vision, coupled with his precise techniques and impeccable ingredients, elevated this humble and simple fare to new heights. As the courses continued to arrive, we were impressed by what was in front of us, and even more intrigued by what was to come. It was a profound dining experience made even more memorable by the company of fellow chefs whom I respect and have worked alongside for many years. It was a meal that all of us fondly remember and one that I will always associate with my first trip to Australia.

Peter is one of the next generation of chefs who has made such an impact on our industry and will continue to do so long into the future. His dishes are carefully and thoughtfully composed, and his flavour profiles are a reflection of the produce that abounds in the area. Tremendously dedicated to his craft, he has great command of the fundamentals and is also able to successfully blend the diverse cultures that have influenced the region with integrity and understanding. His cuisine is a brilliant representation of Australian culture today — global, while maintaining its indigenous spirit.

Australia has been a place that I have always had a desire to explore. It is vast with a richness of history that is unique and compelling. Since my first trip, I have been back once more in 2009. Each visit has left me feeling like I had barely scratched its surface. The land produces raw ingredients — be it fruits, vegetables, seafood or meats — that are of the highest quality and diverse in scope. I have started my list of to-dos and to-sees in preparation of my next trip. And one thing I am certain of: I am already anticipating my return visit to Quay, and experiencing Peter's remarkable cuisine once more.

**Thomas Keller**







