

For the serious foodie, (Paul) Jobin runs cooking classes in the estate kitchen.



Lodge your order here

Steve Meacham is treated to decadent private dining created by a top NZ chef.

One of New Zealand's most inventive chefs, Paul Jobin, is holding court in his kitchen. He's preparing a four-course dinner featuring exclusively local produce and his own vivid imagination.

We diners lap up his eloquent descriptions of each dish as he plates it in front of us. A starter of Akaroa salmon sashimi with Japanese guacamole, sesame mint cabbage and eggwhite pearls is followed with a second course of angus beef cheek, Pigeon Bay pickled mussels, goats chevre and mustard muesli.

The main course is a lamb shoulder that has been slow cooked for 30 hours, with heritage apple, celery sorbet, horseradish, beets and cheesy potato.

But it is the pudding that I find most surprising – a domed concoction of butterscotch semi-freddo, strawberry sorbet and fresh raspberries covered with what Jobin describes as “a rhubarb hanky”, a small handkerchief-sized square of compressed red fruit.

We could be in one of New Zealand's most illustrious restaurants, but we're not. There are just seven of us dining tonight, house guests at one of the country's newest luxury lodges where Jobin – a well-known figure in New Zealand – is private chef.

Annandale Homestead, where we're staying, is a historic property overlooking Pigeon Bay on the beautiful Banks Peninsula, about an hour south-east of Christchurch. The Hay family, from Scotland, landed here in 1843, making them among the earliest settlers on the South Island.

They built a homestead in 1871 and added a hotel in 1884. When the homestead was destroyed by a flood two years later, the Hays moved into the hotel. That's where we are dining and sleeping tonight.

But this isn't your usual colonial era farmstay. In 2005, the entire 1620 hectare property with its extensive coastline featuring a handful of unspoilt bays and inlets, was bought by Mark Palmer, an expatriate Kiwi who has made a fortune in Texan real estate.

Palmer's intention was to restore the homestead as a private retreat for his family and develop the working farm (now home to 14,000 sheep in the lambing season and 500 angus cattle).



Served with serenity: (Clockwise from main) The pool and gym at the Annandale Homestead; the hotel is set in lush surroundings; salmon sashimi with Japanese guacamole, sesame mint cabbage and egg white pearls; the Homestead overlooks Pigeon Bay on the Banks Peninsula, about an hour south-east of Christchurch, New Zealand; the view from a Scrubby Bay bedroom.



overlooking another private bay.

Palmer and Jobin have a concept they call “We Create, You Serve”. Gourmet meals are prepared in advance by Jobin in the estate kitchen, then delivered to the property with precise, easy to follow, instructions which allow guests to cook and serve at a time of their choosing.

For the serious foodie, Jobin also runs cooking classes in the estate kitchen, using fresh vegetables and herbs from the extensive kitchen garden and local meats and fish.

Annandale offers plenty of activities for those who want to keep busy: quad bike tours, heli adventures, fishing and dolphin watching cruises, farm tours, mountain biking, tennis, croquet, even art classes.

But I get the feeling most visitors get to Annandale and just want to relax, take in the surroundings and enjoy the luxurious solitude. Of course, it helps if a private chef is doing the cooking. **T**

But he changed tack, deciding Annandale should be shared with an upmarket, discerning clientele.

So he embarked on a vision that, frankly, must have cost him millions; and the immaculately rejuvenated five-bedroom homestead has now been joined by three other “luxury villas”, spread well out of view of one another, each offering a unique experience to a different type of visitor.

What was the old shepherd's cottage, perched on a remote hill

with sweeping views over the bay, has been delicately reinvented as an affordable romantic weekender, sufficiently secluded for a couple to enjoy the open air bath watched only by the occasional sheep.

I wouldn't call the cottage a “villa”, and the word certainly doesn't do justice to the other two strikingly handsome, stunningly contemporary retreats, both designed by Wellington architect Andrew Patterson and both nominated for awards in 2014.

Scrubby Bay (Palmer insisted on keeping the original geographical name) is a cedar-clad, huge-windowed lodge on its own private beach, with swimming pool and entertaining deck. Sleeping up to 14 adults and children, it's designed for a family or group of friends celebrating a special occasion.

Seascape, on the other hand, is the ultimate “honeymoon hideaway” – a spectacular confection of stone, timber and glass, half-buried in a hillside

TRIP NOTES

MORE INFORMATION
annandale.com

GETTING THERE

Air New Zealand fly daily from all main Australian cities to Christchurch, see airnewzealand.com.au. Annandale is an hour's drive from Christchurch airport. Helicopter transfers can be arranged.

STAYING THERE

The minimum stay is two nights, ranging from \$575 to \$3170 depending on which part of the property you stay.

EATING THERE

Private chef for one multi-course meal for \$445 or for the entire day for \$890.

The writer was a guest of Air New Zealand and Tourism New Zealand.

