

OPEN SKIES COOKBOOK



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A WILD AMERICAN ROAD TRIP
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PRESTEL

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AMERICA HAS ALWAYS HAD A PIECE OF MY HEART.

My connection to this land of opportunity runs deep on both a personal and professional level, and for some time now, I've felt the pull to return to this incredible land. I've lived here before. I've worked here before. I've road-tripped here for pleasure, and now I've come full circle with this profound opportunity to explore and create on a Wild American Road Trip. And I'm still overawed by its grandeur and natural beauty.

This place, this landscape, is wild. From humid subtropical South Florida to the granite cliffs of El Capitan, and beyond to the rugged rock formations and stark desert landscapes of Joshua Tree, the diversity of the landscape here is quite literally unreal. It's vast, it's sparse, it's steeped in history, and it forms the ultimate backdrop for our road trip and some truly great open sky cooking.

Growing up in Tasmania, Australia, every destination was a road trip away. Some of my fondest memories stem from when my brothers and I would rustle up some loose change for petrol and make a break for where the swell was best. Road trip meal-planning was minimal. If there was a jar of Vegemite, some butter and bread, or tomato sauce and hot dogs on hand, we were winning. The occasional roadside food stand and triumphant shot at foraging was just the

cherry on top. The simplicity of those days gave me an appreciation I will hold onto forever, because to road trip with those you love the most was, and indeed still is, living.

One of the things that I love about travel is that wherever you go, food and culture intertwined is a language of its own. So as you set off to road trip America, I would really encourage you to educate yourself on the traditional custodians of the land, to pay homage to First Nations people at any given opportunity, try a indigenous inspired recipe perhaps, and above all else, count your blessings that you get to experience a taste of an incredible culture that came long before you ventured across this vast country.

From Native American cuisine (think indigenous and wild plants, animal ingredients, and cultivated plant ingredients) through to a traditional Texan BBQ, food represents a connection to place, and it opens the doors to the stories behind incredible people and incredible produce from all corners of the world. Food and culture also invoke nostalgia. So whether you're about to embark on your first road trip or your fiftieth, you can safely assume that the experience you're about to commence will take up a notable part of your reflective heart in years to come.

My love affair with America (and the birthplace of my said nostalgia for this country) started at sixteen when I ventured to the USA to work at a kid's summer camp in Virginia. There, the food mainly consisted of Sloppy Joes, big trays of brownies, and hot dog cookouts. While not totally inspiring, the food on offer was intriguing and a cultural experience which irrevocably invokes a reminiscence of sorts any time I think about the tradition of camp food.

When I was twenty-three, I spent a golden summer with friends on Amelia Island where the conversation around food, and the journey to buy produce was just as important as the meal itself. We ate seasonally, and ventured to roadside stands to buy peaches, peanuts, and watermelon every other day. When I think about Amelia Island in the summertime, my mind goes straight to a long bike ride in the heat, followed by a crisp, thirst-quenching giant watermelon on the porch. If I reflect on this time long enough, I can taste the sweetness of the fruit, and feel the camaraderie of my dear friends.

Over the years my ability to recognize what the road could offer grew. As I discovered my passion and calling, I became acutely aware of how the people you meet along the way, the places you visit, and the cultural element of food impacts every road trip experience.

Sometime between kids' summer camp in Virginia and summer in Amelia Island, I got my first car back home in Tasmania: a 1969 Volkswagen Beetle. While not totally practical for this girl and her surfboard, it did represent the beginning of a lifelong passion for character-infused vehicles that has stuck with me to this day. Ultimately, cars are an engine that will get you to various places, but they can also become a character in your life, another member of the family that ignites various emotions. From the luxe to the vintage, all cars have something different to offer, but what unites them, is that they all remain the most important element of any road trip.

Throughout our journey, I'll be accompanied by a number of different vehicles: one for each destination. While this speaks to my inner car enthusiast, when the opportunity arose to road trip with a unique collection of vehicles, this became the perfect way to round out my recipe and road trip offering. If you're traveling to the States from overseas, let it be known that there are loads of great car rental places over here, so have a bit of fun with whatever you decide to hire. Or, for those absolute adventure seekers, why not buy an old car for your road trip and sell it once you're done! I recently had my trusty Defender – "Harriet" – shipped from Australia to join me on my USA travels, and it's been

incredible to have her on the journey over here with me. It feels like I have a piece of home with me.

So, with your car in check, here's my challenge to you. While you're prepping for your road trip, don't overpack. Instead trust that local ingredients will make your dish memorable in more ways than simply adding flavor. Connection to people and place while you're on the road is key to the best culinary experiences. Without packing your entire pantry, you may have to learn to forage, or spark up a conversation with the local barista around where to fish for trout, or buy great pork. And by doing this, not only will you learn something about the town you're visiting and the story of the producer behind your ingredients, but you're guaranteed to learn something about yourself when you sit in the company of the locals you meet along the way.

Practically speaking, there are a few things you can do to successfully plan your road trip cooking. Aside from taking this cookbook with you, keep your eyes peeled for a farmers' market, a butcher, a bakery, an apple tree in a field, a patch of wild blackberries, a flowing river where you can toss a line in, or a dairy stop when you're going through a town. Naturally, you can research purveyors that are off the beaten path but either way,

break your list down into protein, vegetables, dairy, pantry, and then foraging.

Simplicity is possible with great ingredients and when it comes to protein – the right cut, so I would urge you not to skimp on the quality of the produce you use. Always support farmers and producers – it's a must (both for the local economy and for the quality of the food you're purchasing). Where possible, cook over fire because that will give you another element of flavor. And remember that while you're on the road, time is your friend. The beauty in road trip cuisine is that you're generally outdoors, cooking in the environment that you've traveled so far from home to get to. So immerse yourself in it, allow yourself more time in the day to prepare, to try a new recipe and to break bread with those you've chosen to accompany you on your adventure.

There's nothing quite like a loose plan, a full tank of petrol and the prospect of a new location that awaits. So, dear traveler, as we gear up for your next road trip, let's prep your car, pack your pantry basics, and I'll show you some of the people and places that have influenced this book of road trip recipes.

It's good to be on the road together.







HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Some of you may be about to embark on your first road trip, while others may be seasoned adventure seekers. Whether you're traveling to the States before you travel across it, or you're born and bred here in the US, these highlights will help while you're on the road.

First up, this book is designed to take with you on the road, to accompany you on your travels, and to inspire great food along the way. So don't be afraid to get it dirty! Just think, dusty pages will only reinforce all the good stories you're bound to come home with.

These recipes aren't finite to any particular state, so you don't have to follow them to the tee. While I've been fairly specific around certain proteins I have used throughout this book, what you choose to cook is entirely up to you, and the resources available to you in the area you're visiting.

Use this book to inspire, and remember to be playful with your cooking. No steak in the area? No problem. Go with what you can source! There are so many ways to learn from the state you're in, and that starts with produce.

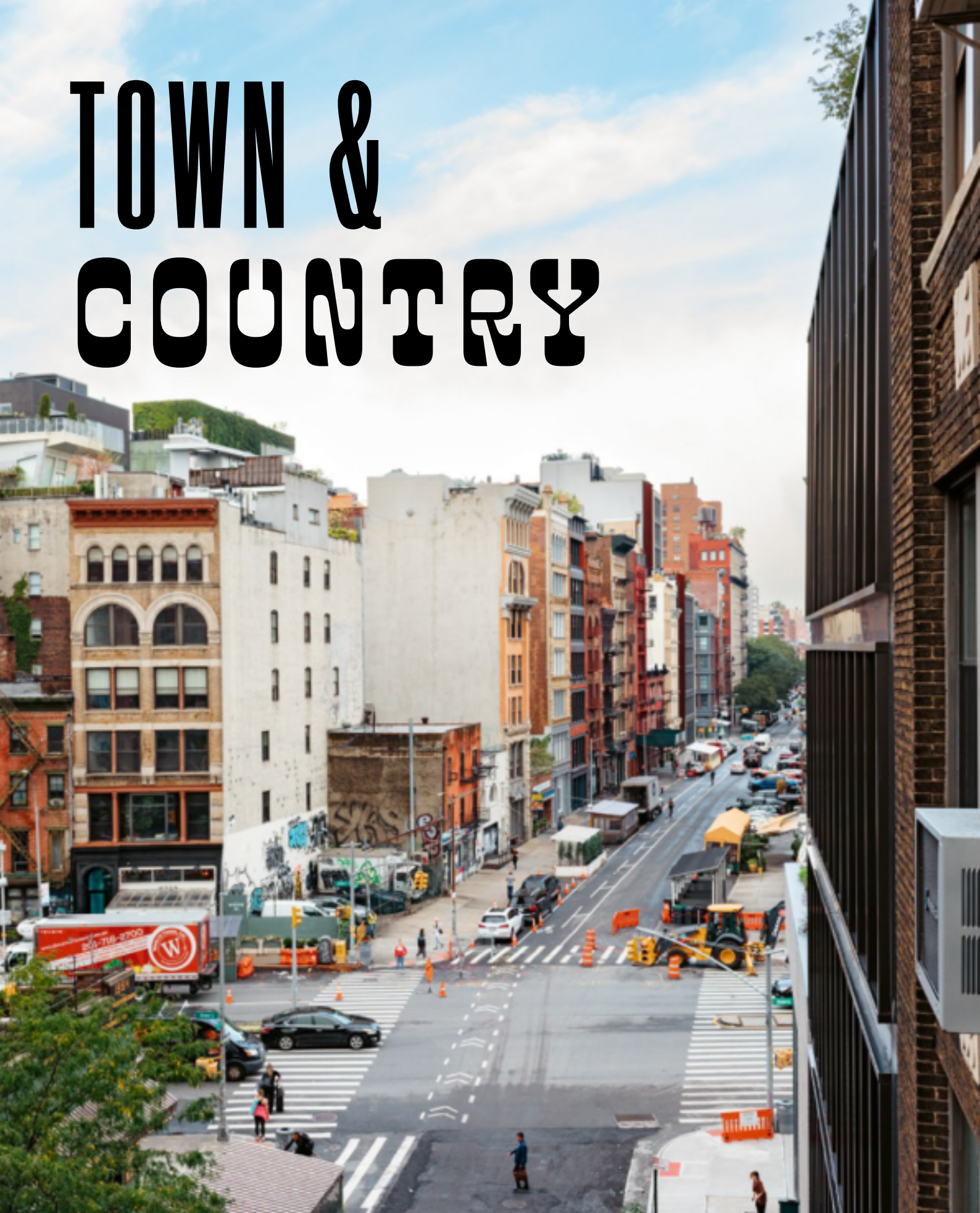
Learn a little! I'd encourage a little education around food history while you're road tripping, remembering at all times to acknowledge the narrative of the landscape.

Fuel up! Don't get caught out, instead, take note of where your next gas station is (unless of course, you're driving an electric!).

Do a weather check! In Australia we don't have the weather extremities that are found in the States, so be sure to check for changes in the weather, to stay prepared along the way. While we're here, ensure you read the signs from the parks and wildlife, and always follow their protocol – there could be bears about!

Pack the right equipment! I'm fairly selective when it comes to packing pans and knives for open sky cooking. I use certain equipment for its versatility and durability, because, let's face it, we need to withstand the rough elements of the wild. While I would encourage you to pick your own equipment that works for your set up and budget, take note of the equipment I've used throughout this book. Hot tip! Two things I never leave behind when I'm camping are a portable propane cooker and a fire kit.

TOWN & COUNTRY



UNFINISHED BUSINESS IN NEW YORK, UPSTATE & NEW ENGLAND

Ah New York, pivotal for my career. Parts of this incredible piece of land have been a big part of my formative chef years and my foundational adventure-seeker years, and gee, it's good to be back. It's not just the fantastic produce found at various farmers' markets in New York, or the unbelievable seafood found in Maine, it's the memory of those personal experiences I encountered when I hit the streets here for the first time many years ago; the energy felt at every intersection within this part of the States made an impact on who I was as a traveler then, and now here again today. Creatively, I fell in love with New York many years ago, and in a way, there's still unfinished business to attend to in this wonderful, wild city.

The first time I walked down Madison Avenue I was twenty-three and it was in that instant that I became enamored by this dream city. Out of nowhere, a lady shouted at me from across the street, "You look fantastic!" and I knew in that moment that NYC could instill a confidence unlike any other city, that anything goes — regardless of who you are or what you do — and that this was a place where I truly wanted to belong. That's the thing with travel: it gives you the opportunity to find new people, to experience new

cultures, to take and glean and learn, and to then put those discoveries, those powers, right there into your pocket.

Once upon a time, I had a dream to run a cookie store here in the heart of the Big Apple. And I came close to making this my reality. I was making cookies from friends' apartments across the city and my business was moving along successfully for over two years before I invested in the oven, the cookie trays, and the dough machine. Then, after three short months of bricks-and-mortar trade, my business partnership failed. Essentially, the city churned and burned me, as it does to so many, and when I left all those years ago, I wasn't sure I'd ever be back. Many years later, a NYC-based publisher picked up my first cookbook, *Wild Adventures*, and I found myself back in familiar territory. I questioned whether a New York redemption was on the horizon. I mean, was this great city tossing me a bone?

From beyond the borders of Manhattan, across the rolling hills of the New England, over to the waves (or rather a dumping shore break) outside of the city, and into the icy cold waters from the snow in March, this area feels personal. I've spent birthdays

in the Hamptons, hosted famils in the region, forged an incredible relationship with Martha Stewart at her holiday house in Maine, sampled wild blueberries at The Lost Kitchen (look it up, it's something else), dined with friends including Francis Mallman in Williamsburg, relished fantastic produce from upstate farmers' markets, purveyors and producers; and this is all quintessentially NYC isn't it? You just never know who might be in the camping lot next to you, or who might message you for a drink in the West Village, right? It's the magic of New York and its surroundings, and it always leaves you wanting more.

I guess if I'm being completely honest, coming back here, to a place that booted me out on my butt many years ago, feels a little exhilarating. A place that held so much of my formative chef years so tightly in its grips has now loosened its grasp and I can see all its beauty and wonder a little clearer, with a little more experience and a little less edge. Perhaps I had to learn from the city, rather than receive from this place. I had to discern from years of wisdom that the streets held and from the people who had made it here. Is it luck or is it grit? Could be both, but I think it's the latter.

Today I'm on the road here as an established chef, visiting and shooting in various locations that have inspired my career. And it feels good to show you what this area means to me personally. There's inspiration at every turn. For example, we shot Susan's Pie in Central Park, under the glory of the Bethesda Fountain, the Angel of the Waters statue watching from atop. The 1860s masterpiece was created by sculptor Emma Stebbin, the first woman to receive a public commission for a major work of art in New York City. Every time I stop in NYC, I visit this spot and take a moment to be thankful for all those people who came before me to blaze trails.

These recipes tell a personal story that is truly dear to my heart, and I dedicate these next pages to all that this place has taught me, to the travelers that have made it, and to all those who have not. Happy chef-ing, friends.







Brook's Brekkie Bowl

This recipe is from the café that I partnered with in Williamsburg in 2017. The dream was to make and sell cookies from the basement, on the side. Alas, the dream didn't really turn into reality, but I would never be doing what I am doing now if it had not been for this turn of events. I share this recipe in the hope that it becomes a morning staple for you, as it did for many of my NYC breakfast regulars at St. Balmain.

2 tablespoons coconut oil
2 garlic cloves
1 cup Tuscan (dinosaur) kale, leaves and stalks torn into bite-sized pieces
1/3 cup (60 g) cooked quinoa
4 slices halloumi cheese
2 soft-boiled or poached eggs (I like soft-boiled)
1/4 lemon

This recipe is quite simple — the work is all in the prep and I recommend getting your ingredients ready so you don't have to stop and start.

Heat a skillet or cast-iron frying pan over medium heat.

Add 1 tablespoon of the coconut oil and the garlic and sauté for about 2 minutes, then add the kale and cook, stirring, for about 3 minutes, until the kale is a little crispy but not burnt. Toss in the quinoa and stir with a spatula until it's warmed through.

Move the mixture to one side of the pan, then add the remaining 1 tablespoon coconut oil to the empty side. Add the halloumi and cook for about 2 minutes, then flip it over and cook for an additional 2 minutes until golden brown (don't keep flipping the halloumi — you want to try and turn it only once so it stays golden).

Transfer the quinoa mixture to a plate and top with the golden halloumi. If using soft-boiled eggs, peel them, then add them to the pan and cook, tossing lightly, until they start to color. Serve alongside the quinoa and halloumi with the lemon for squeezing over.



Breakfast & Brunch

Feeds 1

Equipment: Cast-iron frying pan or skillet • Charcoal or gas barbecue grill (optional)

Seeded Honey

This is a lovely addition to your pantry when traveling. It's easy to make ahead of the trip, and you can use it in salads or add it to sweets and desserts. You can also pre-toast the seeds for a more nutty, savory flavor. Make sure you educate yourself on honey — try to find raw honey, with no added sugar or water — yes, believe it or not, some companies do this.

1 cup (250 ml) raw honey (plus extra if needed)

1 tablespoon sunflower seeds

1 tablespoon pepitas (pumpkin seeds)

1 tablespoon black sesame seeds

1 tablespoon sesame seeds

Half-fill a 10½-ounce (300 ml) glass jar with honey (if you need to adjust the amount of honey, please do).

Lightly toast the seeds in a frying pan over medium heat for 3 minutes until slightly fragrant. Spoon the toasted seeds over the honey, screw on the lid and turn the jar upside down — this will cause the seeds to infuse into the honey.

Set aside for a few hours, then turn the right way up. Serve with anything and everything.





Breakfast & Brunch

Feeds 1

BLT Bagel

In Australia, I grew up eating bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwiches. Recently, I devised this mash-up of two of my favorite foods: BLTs and toasted bagels with cream cheese. You must try this for your next brunch, perhaps with a blood orange Bellini on the side.

1 everything bagel, split

2 tablespoons cream cheese, softened

1 tablespoon mayonnaise

½ teaspoon dried parsley (optional)

Lettuce leaves of your choice

1 tomato, sliced

2 slices bacon, cooked to your liking

Toast the bagel to your liking.

Meanwhile, combine the cream cheese, mayonnaise, and dried parsley (if using) in a small bowl. Spread the mixture onto the cut sides of the toasted bagel.

Add the lettuce, tomato and bacon to one side of the bagel, then place the other half on top. Slice in half and enjoy!





Breakfast & Brunch

Feeds 1