

MAKE YOUR OWN CRUMPETS • FATHER'S DAY FEASTING

# MINDFOOD

#SMARTTHINKING

PSYCHOLOGY

## FEELING INSECURE?

HOW TO CREATE  
A SAFE HAVEN

VOLUNTOURISM

## THE DARK SIDE OF DOING GOOD

WELLBEING

## STAND UP FOR YOUR HEALTH

WHY SITTING  
COULD BE  
KILLING YOU

## ULTIMATE SPA SPECIAL UNWIND, INDULGE & RESET

*"It's never too late —  
never too late to start over,  
never too late to be happy."*

JANE FONDA

JANE FONDA  
"I'VE BEEN THERE,  
DONE THAT &  
SURVIVED"



## PARADISE FOUND

*After falling in love with Cambodia, Melita Hunter and husband Rory launched their own luxurious and eco-friendly resort there.*

WORDS BY MITCHELL OAKLEY SMITH & DANIELLE SEITZ

**N**ative Sydney-sider Melita Hunter moved to Cambodia in 2004 with her husband Rory. They only planned to stay in Phnom Penh for a year, but fell in love with the country and its people.

With a creative background in organic sculpture, Hunter launched a landscape design business. In 2005, the couple heard about some amazing islands with virgin rainforest and white sand beaches off the coast of Cambodia.

The departure point – the port town of Sihanoukville – was not very appealing, and as there were no speedboats or infrastructure, no tourists knew about the islands. The only people going out there were fishermen.

The couple rented a fishing boat and spent two weeks circumnavigating the Koh Rong Archipelago, which turned out to be a life-changing experience. On the last day of their adventure they stopped on the little island of Koh Ouen, looking for lunch. They found a family there with a fishing business who spoke of how

things were changing, how the waters were overfished, and of how it was becoming increasingly difficult to feed their families. They wanted to go back to rice farming and asked the Hunters, “Do you want to buy our island?”

Today, the island and its sister are home to the Hunters’ extremely luxe Song Saa Resort. Its values are based on conservation of the natural environment and community development. The Hunters have created a sustainability centre, which operates as a hub where villagers, practitioners, researchers and staff can interact and share their knowledge and experience on conservation and sustainable livelihood practices. This includes the capacity to host residencies of researchers and graduate interns, as well as providing a venue for workshops and educational activities.

The Song Saa Foundation is dedicated to protecting the land and waters of southern Cambodia’s Koh Rong Archipelago as well as ensuring the provision of education and employment, giving hope and motivation to communities within the archipelago.

Some of Melita Hunter’s personal projects include a line of crockery in collaboration with Khmer potters – “They’re inspired by the islands, with smooth edges and lots of texture,” she says – and a range of silk scarves in partnership with disabled silk weavers from northern Cambodia.

### ISLAND LIFE

At Cambodia’s first private island resort, Song Saa, sustainability and luxury go hand-in-hand. Floors are made from recycled materials and pool tiles are made from local stone.



### What do you love most about living in Cambodia?

The generosity of the people and their enthusiasm to improve their country and overcome its recent tragic history.

### Where is your favourite place to holiday in Cambodia?

Villa Romonea in Kep, on the Cambodian coast, is a beautifully restored property available for exclusive rental, or individual rooms can be booked. I also love Rikitikitavi guesthouse, with rattan ceilings and four-poster beds, set in a converted riverside building in the heart of Kampot.

### Your favourite piece of clothing purchased in Cambodia?

My Khmer straw hat . . . They are made by Cambodian artisans so that supports a local industry.

### What’s your favourite Cambodian cuisine?

Kampot pepper is used all over Cambodia in Khmer cuisine. Kampot pepper crab is divine, with the best specimens coming from the mud flats; the sweetness of the crab meat contrasts beautifully with the kick of the pepper. We use Kampot pepper in our dishes at Song Saa and provide it to guests as a gift with the turn-down service.

