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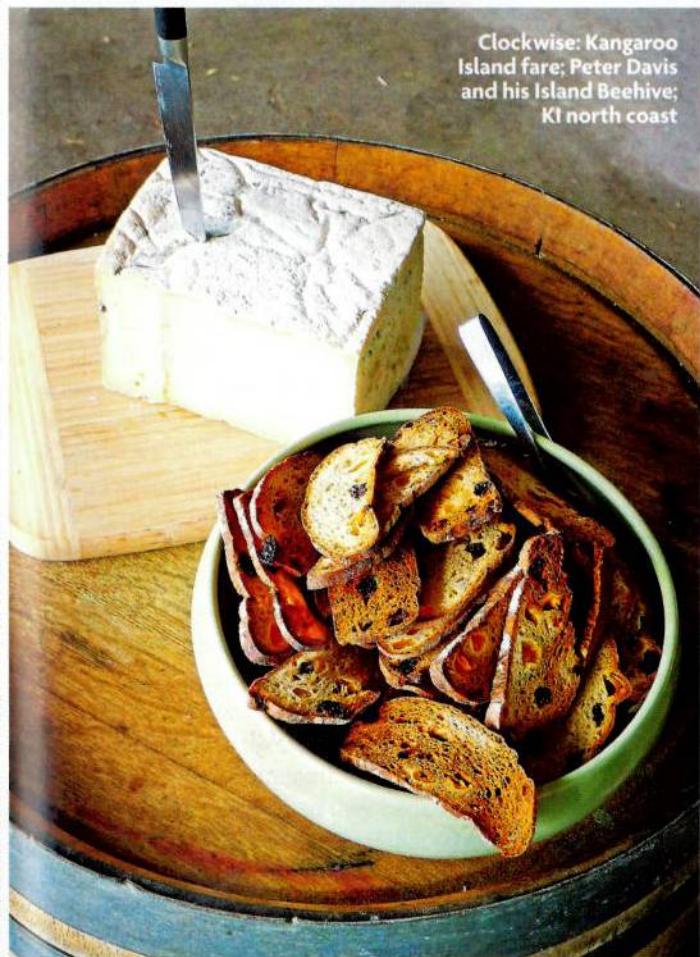
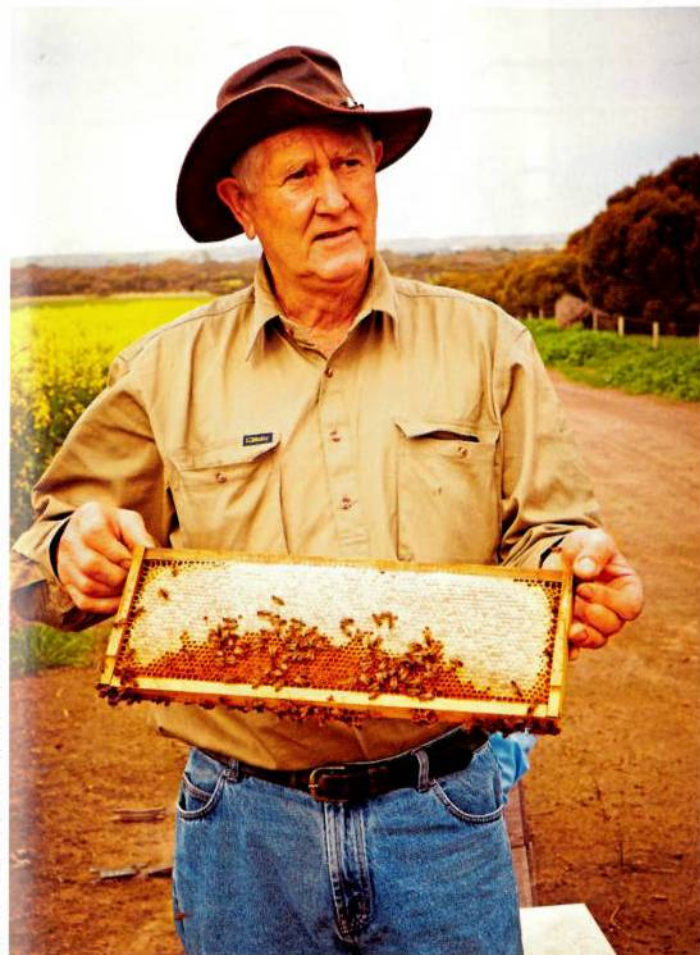


# Island of milk & honey

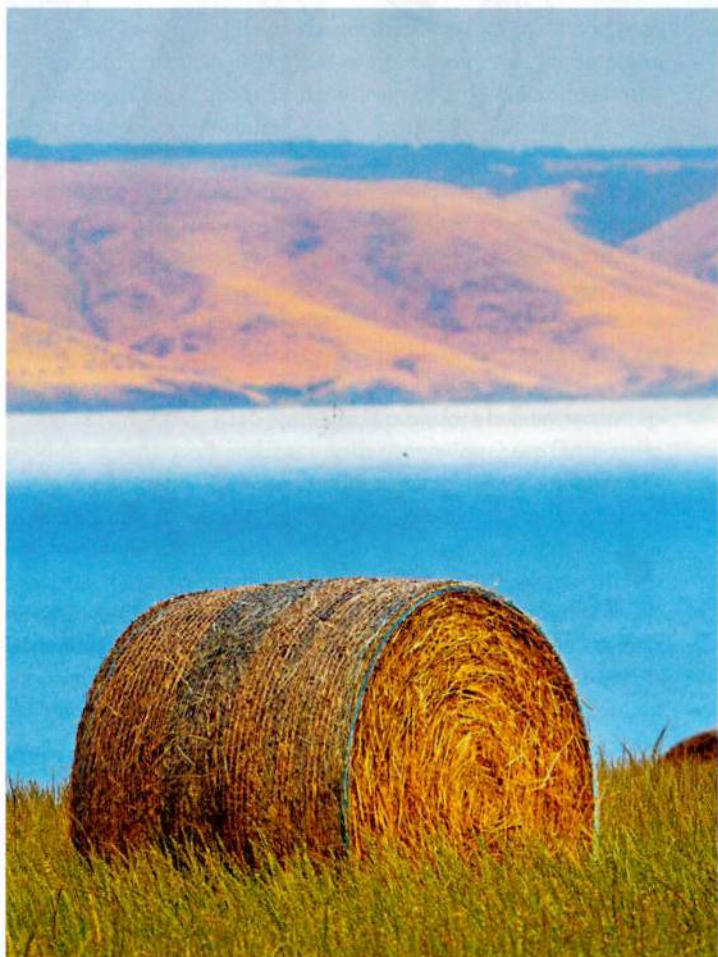
Kangaroo Island, whose FEASTival takes place this month, is now well established as a destination for its food as well for its rugged beauty. **Carli Ratcliff** meets the island's key providores.

Southern Ocean Lodge, Kangaroo  
Island, South Australia





Clockwise: Kangaroo Island fare; Peter Davis and his Island Beehive; KI north coast





Kangaroo Island;  
Justin Harman of Island  
Pure Sheep Dairy (left)

**APPROACHING KANGAROO ISLAND** airport's tiny runway, the wild sea of the Great Australian Bight skirts the white-sand beaches and windswept sheep paddocks. On the ground, Island Pure Sheep Dairy is a five-minute drive through the bush. Here, some 1200 ewes graze, each producing about 800ml of milk a day, to be turned into sheep's milk yoghurt and cheese.

The dairy is one of a growing number of artisan food businesses on the island opening their doors to offer tasting experiences and farm visits. This has helped to create a diverse food trail across the island, providing visitors with a taste of life here and an understanding of the challenges faced by farmers growing and cultivating food on the edge of the Southern Ocean.

"We are a farm, a dairy, a factory, a tourist attraction, a retail outlet and a wholesale distributor, all under one roof," says Island Pure Sheep Dairy general manager Justin Harman. "You can't just walk down the main drag here and experience the food. You have to get out amongst it. If everyone in the world produced food as it should be produced, this is what it would look like."

The island's cheeses, honey, wine, spirits, marron, oysters, free-range eggs and pasture-raised pork now appear on restaurant menus and supermarket shelves across mainland Australia. In recent years, KI (as locals call it) has attracted increasing numbers of visitors keen to explore the island's now well-established gourmet credentials.

Located just 15km from the South Australian coastline, KI is home to just 4500 residents. Some, such as Nick Hannaford, director of the annual FEASTival gourmet food festival were born here. Others are tree-changers, keen for a life of clean air, good food, pristine beaches and no traffic – the island is devoid of traffic lights.

Food production didn't begin here as a boon for tourists, says Hannaford. The remote location means farmers have been forced to be self-sufficient. "In the early 1990s, following the wool market crash, sheep farmers began turning their hand to food. They had to find ways to diversify, and quickly, so they began producing the wide and wonderful variations of ingredients that we now have."

In 2012, Hannaford, an event specialist, launched FEASTival as a means of showcasing and celebrating KI's food, environment and

producers. "I was lucky to spend a good chunk of my childhood here. I wanted to create an event that captured the spirit of the place, celebrating not just the food, but the diversity of the environment, the history and the personalities."

The annual FEASTival has attracted international and local visitors, many repeat guests, who return for the one-off events in extraordinary locations: a James Bond *A View To A Kill*-themed evening begins with martinis and oysters served on Snellings Beach before dinner in a private home on a spectacular cliff face; a local wildlife specialist leads a group deep into the bush to watch the sun rise as breakfast is served; Australian food legend Stephanie Alexander cooks and hosts a dinner on Kingscote Wharf with local cook Kate Sumner.

Sumner arrived on KI 10 years ago. "I came for a holiday, wound up picking up some work and met a sixth-generation sheep farmer who is now my husband," Sumner says. She has since helped establish KI's monthly farmers' market (first Sunday each month) at Penneshaw, where she also runs a stall selling her Kangaroo Island Source products: tomato relish, hot sauce and honey barbecue sauce made using ingredients locally grown and harvested. When not bottling, Sumner teaches visitors how best to use KI produce at her cooking school on the family farm, with its sweeping Southern Ocean views.

Culinary duo Sumner and Alexander opened FEASTival with a hosted dinner – a four-course feast at Kingscote Wharf, the entry point for visitors arriving from Adelaide by SeaLink ferry.

After a welcoming gin and tonic, mixed with Kangaroo Island Spirits gin, the menu incorporated all-local produce – seafood, free-range pork, lamb, beef, duck, lettuce and, of course, honey. Every course was matched with local wines. ➤



Declared a wine region in 2001, KI has 18 wine labels, producing styles from sauvignon blanc and cabernet sauvignon to sparkling. Jeff Howard of Dudley Wines is a fourth-generation KI farmer and its pioneering winemaker. In 1994, he planted about 2ha of grapes, the first commercial winery to process grapes on the island. Howard now has more than 8ha under vines. His son Brodie is the winemaker, and his daughters and daughter-in-law run the cellar door.

“We are lucky here, in that no winery neighbours another,” says Howard. Each winemaker enjoys a unique *terroir* and microclimate. “We are unusual as a wine region in that sense.”

Hard liquor is also produced here. Jon and Sarah Lark of Kangaroo Island Spirits put a copper still on their Cygnet River property in 2007 in order to make gin from local botanicals including native juniper and olearia (coastal daisy). They have since collected awards from London to New York and Hong Kong for their small-batch creations, and have increased their range to include vodka and liqueurs.

Local food enterprise and entrepreneurship has become the fabric of island life. At Parndana Area School, students farm barramundi for customers including Southern Ocean Lodge. At all three of the island primary schools, the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation has helped establish kitchen gardens and field kitchens.

“This is the kind of place where you can disconnect from the digital world and reconnect with the people you love most,” says apiarist Peter Davis, one of KI’s founding food artisans, who grew up next to the government apiary at Flinders Chase in the 1950s.

Kangaroo Island has the world’s only pure Ligurian honey bees. They were brought to KI in 1884 by Justice Boucaut (a three-time premier of South Australia). A year later, KI was declared a bee sanctuary, ensuring purity. Ligurian bee honey is now the island’s iconic food product, revered for its distinctive flavour and sold worldwide. It is also added to premium ice-cream and yoghurt produced on the island. “Every product made on KI is a reflection of the people and their commitment to life here,” says Davis.

Nearly every KI visitor comes to see the bees and get a jar of honey. If Davis is not out in a paddock moving hives, he’s behind the counter. “Life elsewhere could be cheaper and easier. You need to be madly passionate – or passionately mad – to be a food producer here.”

only pure Ligurian bees and their honey. A glass hive allows you to watch the busy bees at work.

#### KANGAROO ISLAND SPIRITS

856 Playford Highway, Cygnet River.

(08) 8553 9211. [kispirits.com.au](http://kispirits.com.au)

The island’s award-winning spirit producers use local flowers and herbage to create small-batch gin, vodka and liqueurs. The cellar door is open for tastings.

#### STAY

LIFE TIME

PRIVATE RETREATS

North Coast Road, Snelling Beach.

(08) 8559 2248. [life-time.com.au](http://life-time.com.au)

A portfolio of luxurious architect-designed private homes in extraordinary bush and cliffside settings overlooking Snellings Beach. Choose from Sky House, Cliff House, Settlers Homestead or Sheoaks. Private chef services and event catering can be organised through partner business Hannaford & Sachs ([hannafordandsachs.com.au](http://hannafordandsachs.com.au)).

From \$410.

SOUTHERN OCEAN LODGE

Hanson Bay Road.

[southernoceanlodge.com.au](http://southernoceanlodge.com.au)

On the edge of the Southern Ocean, Baillie Lodges has created one of Australia’s most remote and luxurious properties, complete with dramatic ocean views, a cliff-top spa, and access to walking trails, beach fishing expeditions and gourmet touring experiences. From \$1050 (pp/night).

✦ For airfares and holiday packages to Kangaroo Island, call Qantas Holidays on 1300 339 543 or visit [qantas.com/holidaysaustralianway](http://qantas.com/holidaysaustralianway)

#### EAT

SEALINK KANGAROO ISLAND FEASTIVAL

[sealink.com.au/ki-feastival](http://sealink.com.au/ki-feastival)

May 1-8. FEASTival features a series of dining, cooking and beverage masterclasses celebrating Kangaroo Island produce and producers.

ISLAND PURE SHEEP DAIRY

127 Gum Creek Road, Cygnet River.

(08) 8553 9110. [islandpure.com.au](http://islandpure.com.au)

This working sheep farm, dairy and cheesery offers milking, cheesemaking demonstrations and tastings.

DUDLEY WINES

1153 Willoughby Road,

Cuttlefish Bay. (08) 8553 1333.

[dudleywines.com.au](http://dudleywines.com.au)

Vineyard and cellar door, with cafe and wine tastings.

KANGAROO ISLAND SOURCE

90 Cape Willoughby Road,

Penneshaw. (08) 8553 1041.

[kangarooislandsource.com.au](http://kangarooislandsource.com.au)

Farm-based cooking school where Kate Sumner teaches visitors to cook using local produce.

ISLAND BEEHIVE

59 Playford Highway, Kingscote.

(08) 8553 0080.

[island-beehive.com.au](http://island-beehive.com.au)

Peter Davis and family are the caretakers of some of the world’s