

PHOTOGRAPHY

CAPTIVATING WILDLIFE UP CLOSE

SNAPSHOT OF A WILD SANCTUARY

Emilia Vranjes

WHEN award-winning animal photographer Alex Cearnis visited a wildlife sanctuary in Cambodia last year, she experienced a mix of emotions.

There was the delight of being kissed by elephants, the exhilaration of standing one metre from a captive but wild tiger and the joy of watching a six-month-old bear cub roll around like a baby, only to hear the horror story of how she received her bodily scars at the hands of a vicious hunter.

"She was tied to a tree with a piece of wire around her neck by a hunter to lure out the mother so that he could then kill the mother," Cearnis said.

There was also a close encounter with a hairy-nosed otter rescued from the meat market or pet trade – the only one in the world remaining in captivity.

She also held a precious African hedgehog, which had been smuggled into Asia.

Cearnis' experiences at the Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Centre in Cambodia resulted in 60 photos capturing the rare and endangered animals' natural majesty, strength and spirit, which will go on sale next month to raise funds for the Free the Bears Fund and Wildlife Alliance's Care for Rescued Wildlife program.

More than 1000 birds, mammals and reptiles, and 200 bears, receive food, shelter, vet care and enrichment at the centre, with funding from individual donations, special projects and the efforts of volunteers.



Wildlife photographer Alex Cearnis with some of the prints she will donate. Picture: Marcus Whisson d401034

"It looks like a zoo, but they're all rescued animals, which you tend to forget when you're there," Cearnis said.

"I hope it makes people aware of the illegal wildlife trade in South-East Asia."

Cearnis' love of animals stems from her childhood in outback South Australia where her father was a shearer and wool valuer, and later Tom Price in the Pilbara.

After taking up photography as a hobby in 2007, she turned her back on a high-profile position for the Australian Federal Government, which had followed 14 years as a police officer and crime analyst.

In 2010, she went full-time behind the lens with the opening of commercial photography business Houndstooth Studio.

"People tell me I have the gift of sixth sense communication with animals, but to me it's just about body language," she said.

"If they're timid, terrified or cowering, I know it's about energy and staying calm."

THE ESSENTIALS

WHAT: Cambodia Wild - Portraits of Hope
WHERE: Friday, June 14, from 6.30 to 9.30pm
WHEN: Tompkins on Swan, Alfred Cove
ENTRY: Gold coin donation

BIG DON'S SEAFOOD HOT POT

Don Hankey, who conducted cooking demonstrations during the Avon Valley Gourmet Food & Wine Festival at the weekend, rates this recipe as one of his favourites.

SERVES 4

This is a classic and very yum dish to make – it might appear complicated but is really very simple and fresh.

Ingredients

- 12 Shark Bay wild broken prawn flesh
- 100g Carnarvon broken scallop meat
- 2kg de-bearded WA mussels
- 20g firm-flesh fish cut into chunks
- 6 ripe tomatoes, chopped
- Diced red onion
- 2 sliced medium-heat chillies
- 3 cloves of crushed garlic
- 1 lemon cut in quarters
- 2 lemon myrtle leaves
- Splash of southern riesling
- Parsley and coriander to garnish

Method

- Fry onion, garlic, chillies and lemon myrtle in olive oil to bring out the flavours.
- Add in tomatoes and riesling and cook for a couple of minutes.
- Toss in mussels, prawns and fish and cook with the lid on for two minutes.
- Stir in scallops and lemon, replace lid and cook until mussels have opened.
- Do not overcook the seafood; it is best to slightly undercook.
- Take off the heat, toss in fresh herbs and serve with a spring salad and crusty white bread.



A SMORGASBORD OF FINE FESTIVAL FARE

ANYONE who turned up to chef Herb Faust's degustation dinner without an empty stomach or appetite for culinary adventure was risking disappointment at the weekend.

Whipping up five courses at the Avon Valley Gourmet Food & Wine Festival might seem like small fry compared to winning the 2010 Australian Iron Chef title, but Herb insists that was not so.

"I was given a lot of creative freedom and time to prepare, so was able to take the menu as far as I liked," he said.

"By pushing the envelope and challenging myself as a chef I was able to take diners on a truly wonderful journey."

After the success of last year's festival degus-

tation dinner, Herb was ready ramp to things up a notch.

"I work to make the flavours very accessible – but with a twist on technique and presentation. All I've ever wanted in life was to share my food," he said.

Herb's first dish was a deep-fried goats' cheese egg with a beetroot juice centre set on a crispy beetroot nest with spiced walnut candy. Patrons finished the night off with black rice-crusted coconut rough ice cream and handmade smoky dark chocolate. This meal certainly wasn't something you'd find at your local cafe.

The dinner was one of many opportunities to tantalise the taste buds at the festival.

Rosanna Candler

SPINACH AND FETA PANCAKES



Ingredients

- 1 quantity Basic pancakes (see related recipe)
- 1/2 bunch English spinach, trimmed, shredded
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
- 100g Greek-style feta, crumbled
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed

Method

Follow step 1 of Basic pancakes (below), using 1/4 cup sugar and omitting vanilla. Stir in spinach, chives, feta and garlic. Season with salt and pepper.

Follow step 2 of Basic pancake.

Basic pancake recipe

Whisk milk, egg and vanilla together in a jug. Sift flour and bicarbonate of soda into a bowl. Stir in sugar. Make a well in centre. Add milk mixture. Whisk until just combined.

Heat a large non-stick frying pan over medium heat. Brush pan with butter. Using 1/4 cup mixture per pancake, cook 2 pancakes for 3 to 4 minutes or until bubbles appear on surface. Turn and cook for 3 minutes or until cooked through. Transfer to a plate. Cover loosely with foil to keep warm. Repeat with remaining mixture, brushing pan with butter between batches. Serve.

GOT A RECIPE TO SHARE?

We're looking for dishes to feature: email taste@communitynews.com.au.



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