

CELEBRATE

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# Norfolk Island Thanksgiving

About a two-hour flight off the east coast of Australia, the people of Norfolk Island are celebrating Thanksgiving with a pot luck table laden with traditional and festive dishes.





**PINEAPPLE AND ORANGE  
UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE**

*Sweet, just-picked pineapple gives  
freshness to this caramelised cake.*

*recipe page 104*

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ith a cheerful glint in his eye, Norfolk Island's Arthur 'Onion' Evans announces, "It's heavy work, this!" as he rinses the final remnants of greying banana from a slab of black basalt. Arthur's traditional hand-carved grater, known as a *yolla*, has just been put to work shredding green bananas to make dumplings. They'll be simmered in a mixture of coconut milk and cow's milk and then gently reheated and served at tomorrow's Thanksgiving lunch.

Norfolk Island, an Australian external territory, is one of only a few places in the world outside the USA and Canada to celebrate Thanksgiving. "It's a tradition inspired by the visiting American whaling fleets in the 1800s," explains Arthur, a local historian.

Taking a breather, he grabs a glass of homemade lemon cordial, then it's straight onto the next job of making two trifles. "We always have a heap of puddings, but there's a particular gentleman who lost his wife a few years ago and he loves a proper trifle," confides Arthur. "I try to do an extra one, so he has a bit to take home, too."

Traditionally a day to give thanks for the harvest, the public holiday also celebrates the warm ties and generous spirits that bind this community. Special events abound, such as an annual lunch hosted by Arthur and his friends, Bernie and Mary Christian-Bailey. This year the lunch is at Devon House, the Christian-Bailey's beautiful 1920s home.

Arthur and Bernie, like many of their fellow islanders, are direct descendants of British Bounty mutineers and their Tahitian wives who, from 1789, lived in unofficial exile on Pitcairn Island, before being 'gifted' Norfolk Island by Queen Victoria in 1856. "The culture on Norfolk Island is very distinct – a blend of English and Tahitian. You can see this in our traditional dishes, which we serve alongside more American ones," says Arthur.

Thanksgiving on Norfolk begins early for many with an annual service at the All Saints Anglican Church. Inside the church, vegetables, tropical fruits and still-warm baked goods spill into the aisle, while towering corn stalks adorn pews. Afterwards, the produce is sold market-style in the church grounds to raise funds for charities.

Mary and Bernie head straight home from church to gather salad ingredients from the garden and assemble the pot luck table. Baked ham, roast turkey, local guava jelly and buttered cornbread, made from fresh corn, grace the



## THE MENU

Tahitian  
fish salad

Corn pilhi

Twice-cooked  
pork shoulder  
with chilli  
pineapple

Passionfruit tart

Pineapple and  
orange upside-  
down cake

table, with traditional Pitcairn and Norfolk dishes taking pride of place. Arthur's green banana dumplings, called *mudda*, a banana *pilhi* (a savoury baked banana dish), along with a Tahitian fish salad, will all prove popular.

The Christian-Baileys' son, Charles, and a few friends recently built a *nakamal*, a traditional Vanuatuan meeting hut, in the garden, and it becomes a hub of activity. To the gentle strumming of a ukulele, the residents pull pork and vegetables from an underground oven, and *kava* is poured.

"Lolly scramble!" booms a voice, and children dash from every direction. As the sky turns peach, Mary serves dessert – fresh fruit pies, a coconut flan and more. "I give thanks for the passionfruit tart," laughs an elderly gent as he tucks into a piece. Then, pointing to Arthur's trifle: "But the regret will be too much if I don't have a big bowl of that, too!"

On a shelf in Mary's fridge, the second bowl of trifle sits undiscovered. It's a treat that will ensure the spirit, and the flavours, of a Norfolk Island Thanksgiving will continue for a few more days to come.



From far left: the pot luck feast; Arthur Evans's green banana dumplings are a real hit each year, the fruit freshly cut from the tree; local Joyce Lodge slices the desserts,



Clockwise from left: each year the All Saints Anglican Church is adorned with fruit and vegetables; fresh produce is sold in the church grounds to raise money for charity; a little Thanksgiving cheer.



### TAHITIAN FISH SALAD★

Serves 8 • Prep 15 mins

- 250ml (1 cup) coconut milk
- 2 limes, zested, juiced, plus lime wedges, to serve
- 2 tbs brown sugar
- 500g sashimi-grade kingfish, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup coriander leaves
- 2 bird's-eye chillies, thinly sliced
- 1 cucumber, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, seeded, finely chopped

**1** Combine coconut milk, lime juice and zest, sugar and 1 tsp salt in a bowl, stirring to dissolve sugar. Set aside.

**2** Arrange kingfish on plates. Top with coconut dressing and scatter over remaining ingredients. Serve with extra lime wedges.

**DRINK** 2013 Grosset Alea Riesling, Clare Valley, SA (\$33)



**TAHITIAN  
FISH SALAD**

*This signature Island  
dish adds freshness to  
the festive table.*

Clockwise from right: The twice-cooked pork shoulder makes for a tasty sandwich; guests fill their plates again and again; Mary and Bernie Christian-Bailey hosted the festive lunch; the pork is cooked in an underground oven, which is tended to expertly.



## **PASSIONFRUIT TART**

*This tangy dessert is welcome after the rich dishes on offer.*

*[recipe page 102](#)*





Twice-cooked pork shoulder with chilli pineapple, recipe page 102.



### An island home

Norfolk Island, an external territory of Australia, lies 1600km north-east of Sydney in the South Pacific Ocean. Described by Captain Cook as 'paradise' upon his arrival in 1774, the island was formally colonised by the British in 1788, around six weeks after Sydney was colonised. Norfolk later became home to the Pitcairn Islanders in 1856. Largely self-governing since 1979, the island is currently home to a permanent population of around 1800. Norfolk Island's quarantine laws are among the most rigorous in the world, with potatoes, onions, garlic and ginger the only fresh produce allowed to be imported. This means all other fruit, vegetables and herbs used are grown locally on Norfolk's 34.6 square kilometres of land.



Corn pilhi is a Thanksgiving favourite. Right: enjoying the pot luck spread.



### CORN PILHI★

Serves 8 • Prep 10 mins • Cooking 50 mins

875ml (3½ cups) milk  
3 tsp caraway seeds  
170g (1 cup) instant polenta  
200g sweet potato (kumara), grated  
100g grated cheddar

**1** Preheat oven to 180C. Grease a 1.5L shallow ovenproof dish and set aside.

**2** Place milk and 1 tsp caraway seeds in a saucepan over medium heat and bring to a simmer. Add polenta in a slow, steady stream, whisking for 2 minutes or until thickened. Add 1 tsp salt. Stir in sweet potato and cheddar.

**3** Spoon into prepared dish, smooth surface and scatter with remaining 2 tsp caraway seeds. Bake for 40 minutes or until golden and crisp.

### TWICE-COOKED PORK SHOULDER WITH CHILLI PINEAPPLE

Serves 8 • Prep 15 mins • Cooking 5 hrs 35 mins, plus 5 mins cooling and 15 mins resting

1 tbs vegetable oil  
2.5kg pork shoulder on the bone  
1 tsp cloves  
10 star anise  
2 long red chillies, halved, stems intact  
Banana leaves\* or foil, to wrap

#### Chilli pineapple

1 pineapple, peeled, cored, chopped into 2cm pieces  
8 star anise  
5 bird's-eye chillies, halved lengthwise  
110g (½ cup) caster sugar  
125ml (½ cup) white wine vinegar

**1** To make chilli pineapple, place all ingredients over medium–low heat, stirring to dissolve sugar. Simmer for 20 minutes or until glossy and reduced, then set aside to cool.  
**2** Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium–high heat. Add pork, season, then cook, turning, for 8 minutes or until browned all over. Pour in enough cold water to just cover, then add cloves, star anise, chillies and 1 tsp salt. Bring to a simmer over medium–low heat and cook for 1½ hours or until tender. Remove from liquid, discarding liquid, and cool slightly.  
**3** Preheat oven to 140C. Wrap pork in banana leaves and place in a roasting pan. Roast for 3½ hours or until very tender. Rest for 15 minutes. Shred and serve with chilli pineapple.  
\*Banana leaves are from Asian food shops.  
**DRINK** 2011 Rochford Yarra Valley Cerberus, Yarra Valley, Vic (\$27)

### PASSIONFRUIT TART

Serves 8 • Prep ½ hr, plus 3½ hrs chilling  
• Cooking 1 hr 10 mins, plus 40 mins cooling

2 eggs, plus 2 egg yolks  
250ml (1 cup) passionfruit pulp (about 12), plus extra, to serve  
165g (¾ cup) caster sugar  
2 tbs lime juice »



Joyce Lodge and Margaret Buffett bring desserts for the Thanksgiving table. Left: a guitar and a ukulele add to the atmosphere.



125g unsalted butter, chopped  
2 tbs cornflour  
60ml (¼ cup) thickened cream

#### Pastry

200g (1½ cups) plain flour, sifted  
55g (½ cup) icing sugar, sifted  
125g unsalted butter, chilled, chopped  
2 egg yolks

**1** To make pastry, place flour and icing sugar in a food processor with a pinch of salt and pulse to combine. Add butter and pulse until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Combine egg yolks with 2 tbs iced water and stir into flour mixture until dough just comes together. Turn out onto a clean surface and bring together. Cover in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 1 hour.

**2** Preheat oven to 180C. Roll pastry out on a clean, lightly floured work surface to 3mm-thick and use to line a 22cm x 3cm-deep fluted tart pan. Refrigerate for 30 minutes. Line pastry with baking paper and fill with beans or rice. Bake for 15 minutes, remove beans and paper. Remove pastry case from pan and bake for 10 minutes or until golden and just dry to touch. Reduce oven temperature to 160C.

**3** Meanwhile, whisk eggs, extra egg yolks, passionfruit, sugar and lime juice in a saucepan over medium-low heat. Stir in butter and cook, stirring, for 6 minutes. Remove ⅓ cup passionfruit mixture, add cornflour and stir to combine, then whisk back into pan. Whisk for 4 minutes or until mixture thickens, then

whisk in cream. Transfer to a bowl, cover surface with plastic wrap and cool completely.

**4** Pour mixture into pastry case, place on an oven tray and bake for 30 minutes or until cold. Cool to room temperature, then refrigerate for 2 hours or until cold. Top with extra passionfruit pulp and serve cut into slices.

**DRINK** 2009 *Château Doisy-Védrières Sauternes, Bordeaux, France* (375ml, \$45)

### PINEAPPLE AND ORANGE UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE★

Serves 8 • Prep 20 mins • Cooking 45 mins, plus 10 mins resting

230g unsalted butter, chopped, softened, plus extra, to grease  
½ pineapple, peeled, halved, thinly sliced  
200g brown sugar  
110g (½ cup) caster sugar  
2 tsp vanilla extract  
1 orange, zested, half juiced (about 60ml)  
3 eggs

300g (2 cups) self-raising flour  
185ml (¾ cup) buttermilk

**1** Preheat oven to 160C. Grease a 22cm round cake pan with butter and line sides with baking paper. Arrange pineapple over base, overlapping, in a circular pattern. Place brown sugar and 100g butter in a saucepan over medium-low heat and stir to dissolve sugar. Pour caramel over pineapple in pan.

**2** Using an electric mixer, beat butter, caster sugar and vanilla until pale and fluffy. Beat in zest and juice, then beat in eggs, one at a time.

**3** Sift flour and ¼ tsp salt into a bowl. Working in 3 batches, stir flour into egg mixture, alternating with buttermilk, until smooth.

**4** Pour batter into pan and smooth surface. Place pan on an oven tray and bake for 45 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Set aside for 10 minutes. Carefully invert onto a serving plate while caramel is still warm. Serve warm.

**DRINK** *Two Hands Brilliant Disguise Moscato, Barossa Valley, SA* (500ml, \$18) 🍷