

# Kimberley flair

CHEF JORDAN SMITH EXPLAINS THE CULINARY LOGISTICS OF FEEDING GUESTS AT A REMOTE KIMBERLEY CAMP, WRITES LIANI SOLARI.

**When you board** a light plane from Kununurra, then a helicopter bound for Kimberley Coastal Camp on the shores of Admiralty Gulf, chances are you'll be bringing your lunch with you. That's thanks to Sydney-born chef Jordan Smith, one of four staff who live and work at this remote luxury camp accessible only by chopper.

The logistics of feeding up to 12 guests in the Kimberley wilderness require exacting planning and a degree of flexibility.

"Ordering is a big part of my job," Jordan says. "I make as much as I can from scratch, including bread and yoghurt, and I grow some things here – tomatoes, eggplants, zucchinis, pumpkins, lettuce, snake beans, passionfruit, pawpaws, herbs and chillis – but I source most of my fresh produce from a local farm in Kununurra.

"Like our guests [who are allowed a maximum of 10 kilograms of luggage each], my food order has to be flown in, so I have to make sure it fits both weight-wise and bulk-wise in the helicopter. And if I forget to order something, I have to be flexible or know of an alternative ingredient to use."

Catering for the camp begins with thorough planning. Guests fill out a questionnaire before they arrive so Jordan can try to accommodate individual tastes, whether they're fish-with-mash-and-beans types or laksa lovers. "The first couple of meals, I also gauge how much they eat," she says, "because

I want to make enough food so the guests are satisfied, but I don't want to waste food or run out of food during their stay."

Seafood is guaranteed at this popular destination for fishing groups, requiring more flexibility from Jordan, whose start time is at the mercy of the tides. "Jimmy, our fishing guide, takes guests out fishing in the morning. If it's an early tide, I can be up as early as 4.30am to start making breakfast."

The catch of the day is a case of wait and see. "The group might go out specifically to catch barramundi; whether or not they catch barramundi is another matter, but they generally bring something back, whether it's fingermark, coral trout, mud crabs or huge oysters. The fish caught that morning is served for dinner that night. You can't get any fresher than that, but it also means I can't have a set menu. However, all of the fish here is white flesh, which generally has a similar mild flavour to it, so whether they catch barramundi or fingermark, usually it can be interchangeable."

The staff and guests come together at a large communal table for dinner, which Jordan serves family-style on platters to enable her to join the group. "We sit around the table and talk about the fishing trip the guests did that day or the Aboriginal rock art tour they went on, tell a few yarns and get to know them, which is lovely.

"I enjoy the fact that I don't have a set menu, because it gives me the freedom to try to please the guests and it gives me the chance to be creative. When I can see guests are enjoying the meal, it's very gratifying. Everybody seems to love my chilli mud crabs. It's not a traditional recipe by any means, but one that I made up myself through research and trial and error."

Before coming to Kimberley Coastal Camp, Jordan worked as a chef around the world, from the French Alps to Park City ski resort in Utah. The Kimberley's perennial heat is a far cry from the alpine climate she favours, but there are trade-offs.

"As long as I'm near water or mountains, I'm happy. Although it's very different from a ski resort, it's just stunning up here. I love the rocks, the spinifex grass, the wildlife – dingoes, rock wallabies, olive pythons – and the sea eagles and whistling kites. Best of all, I can see the water from my kitchen." 

For more information visit [www.kimberleycoastalcamp.com.au](http://www.kimberleycoastalcamp.com.au).

**Clockwise from below:** Kimberley Coastal Camp's chef, Jordan Smith; freshly caught saltwater barramundi baked with a macadamia, mint and lemon crust; a view of the remote camp.



Photography by Travis Hayto.



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### BAKED BARRAMUNDI WITH A MACADAMIA, MINT AND LEMON CRUST

Serves 4–6

#### Ingredients

- 150g whole macadamia nuts
- ½ bunch fresh mint leaves
- 1 lemon, zest
- 200g breadcrumbs
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1–2 barramundi fillets, cut into portions

#### Method

1. Preheat oven to 200°C.
2. In a food processor, blend nuts, mint, lemon zest, breadcrumbs, salt and pepper until combined. The mixture should have the consistency of breadcrumbs. It will be slightly moist because the nuts have oil in them; this helps it to stick to the fish.
3. On a greased baking tray (use canola oil spray or olive oil) place the portions of fish with some space between them so they cook evenly.
4. Place the nut mixture on top of the fish. Bake for 15–20 mins or until the fish is just cooked (you want the fish to retain as much moisture as possible) and the crust is golden brown. (It could take less time, depending on the thickness of the fish portions.)
5. Serve with steamed rice and stir-fried vegetables.

#### Chef's note

Freshly caught saltwater barramundi is what I use at Kimberley Coastal Camp, but you can substitute with any other mild-flavoured white-flesh fish.

