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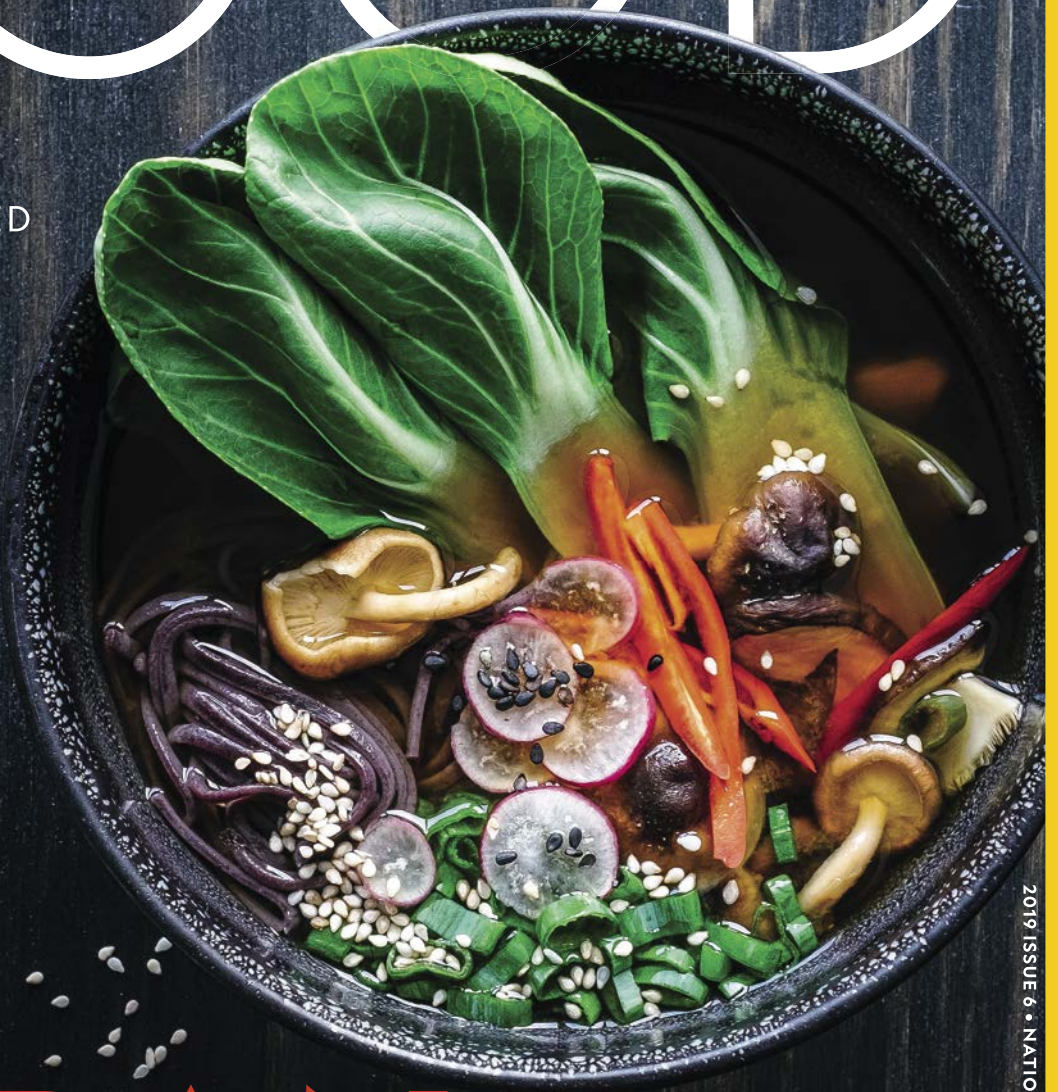
SPILLING THE BEANS
ECUADOR FALLS BACK IN
LOVE WITH CHOCOLATE

FOOD

GOULASH
SLOW-SIMMERED
PERFECTION

PIEDMONT
ALL HAIL THE
HAZELNUT

SIFNOS
THE GOURMET
GREEK ISLAND



JAPAN

IN 11 DISHES

Ramen, sushi, mochi and more — exploring
the tastes of a timeless cuisine

FIND YOUR WAY TO THE CHOCOLATE ISLANDS

Take a trip to a tiny, unspoilt archipelago to be immersed in pristine rainforest, award-winning restaurants and the history — and taste — of chocolate



It may be the second-smallest country in Africa, but São Tomé and Príncipe has much to offer visitors. The archipelago, located 150 miles off the west coast of Africa, was once the world's biggest cacao producer, earning itself a name as the 'Chocolate Islands'. In 2012, Príncipe became a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, promoting efforts to preserve the island. And there is plenty here worth preserving. Tiny Príncipe is known for its unspoilt rainforest and, along with its bigger sibling São Tomé, is still largely untouched by tourism.

An unusual safari

Chocolate-lovers can experience a taste of São Tomé and Príncipe's rich cacao-producing history as part of the Tropical Chocolate Safari, a week-long programme taking place from 3-10 September. It's an immersive line-up, with writing workshops from Joanne Harris, author of *Chocolat*; truffle-making classes from chocolatier David Greenwood-Haigh; and chocolate tastings and visits to a historic cacao plantation. Meals include a themed dinner at the OKA restaurant at Sundy Praia Lodge, which was awarded the 'Special prize Exterior' by Prix Versailles in 2019 for its architecture and bamboo dining area. Guests can stay at the elegant Omali Lodge on Lagarto beach; the beachfront Bom Bom resort; Roça Sundy, set within a restored plantation house; or Sundy Praia Lodge, with its luxury tented villas.

Essentials

How to do it: The package, from €3,495 (£3,124) per person, includes all activities, internal flights, half board and seven nights' accommodation.



IMAGES: @HBD



Plaice with mussels and samphire

With most of my dishes, Mother Nature does the hard work. Here, the earthy sweetness of plaice pairs well with sweet and slightly bitter mussels

SERVES: 4 AS A MAIN TAKES: 40 MINS PLUS 24 HRS FOR THE MUSTARD OIL

INGREDIENTS

2 plaice, about 1kg each, filleted and trimmed
olive oil, for cooking

FOR THE MUSTARD OIL

200ml light olive oil
2 tbsp English mustard powder

FOR THE MUSSELS

1kg live mussels, cleaned and de-bearded
1 shallot, peeled and chopped
1 garlic clove, chopped
1 bay leaf
200ml white wine
100g plain flour
2 large eggs, beaten
200g panko breadcrumbs
sunflower oil, for deep-frying

FOR THE SAUCE

2 large egg yolks
30ml white wine vinegar
1 tsp English mustard
pinch of saffron strands

300ml light olive oil
saved mussel cooking liquor (see method)

FOR THE GARNISH

2 leeks, trimmed and well washed
200g samphire, washed and woody bits removed
sea aster, if available (or flat-leaf parsley)

METHOD

1 Make the mustard oil a day before serving. Whisk the olive oil and mustard powder in a bowl to combine, then pour into a container, cover and leave to stand for 24 hrs. Decant into a bottle, leaving the sediment behind.
2 On the day of serving, prepare the plaice. Heat the grill to high, lightly oil the grill tray and sprinkle with salt. Lay the plaice fillets on the tray, skin-side down, and sprinkle with more salt, then turn over so the skin is on top; arrange so the fillets aren't touching, then set aside.
3 Put the mussels in a large pan with a tight-fitting lid and set over a medium-high heat, uncovered. Once hot, add the shallot, garlic, bay leaf and wine, then cover and steam the mussels for 3 mins, or until they've opened. Tip into a colander set over a bowl to catch the liquor (this'll be used for the sauce). When the shells are cool enough handle, pick out the meat and put in a bowl. Discard the shells and any unopened mussels. Leave to cool, then place in the fridge unless using straight away.

4 To make the sauce, put the egg yolks, vinegar, mustard and saffron into a bowl and whisk for 30 secs. Slowly add the oil in a steady stream, whisking until it's all incorporated. Add enough of the reserved mussel cooking liquor to thin the mixture to a sauce consistency. Season with salt and pepper to taste, then transfer to a pan.
5 Take the mussels out of the fridge. Tip the flour, eggs and breadcrumbs into separate bowls. One by one, pass the mussels through the flour, the eggs and then the breadcrumbs to coat, then arrange on a tray and set aside.
6 For the garnish, bring a pan of salted water to the boil. Add the leeks and simmer for 4 mins, then remove with a slotted spoon. Add the samphire and simmer for 1 min, then drain. Slice the leeks at an angle into 1cm pieces.
7 Place the tray of fish fillets under the grill and cook for 3 mins (they'll overcook easily, so watch carefully). At the same time, deep-fry the mussels in the hot oil for 2 mins until crisp. Drain on kitchen paper and season with salt and pepper. Spoon the sauce onto four plates and arrange the plaice on top. Add the leek and samphire garnish, then finish with the breaded mussels, sea aster and a drizzle of mustard oil.