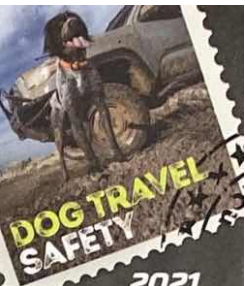


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2021
JULY/AUGUST
ISSUE

A GUIDE TO AUTOMOTIVE ADVENTURE & OUTDOOR LIFESTYLE

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Creative heritage-style camp cooking

TEXT BY MERCEDES LILIENTHAL
PHOTOS BY BIANCA JORDAN

After my day of surfing and fishing, darkness starts to descend on a remote, sandy beach. Temperatures drop enough to send chills throughout the air. Ocean waves crash onto the shore, creating the perfect symphony of solitude. The lack of cell phones and iPads makes eyes wander to the sun setting low on the horizon and then up to the stars starting to show themselves. This is living, this is what it's all about. Isn't it?

Sophie Hollingsworth was tired of living in cities stifled by skyscrapers. She longed for something different. She wanted to challenge herself and sleep under the stars—something she wasn't getting with the hustle and bustle of populated life.

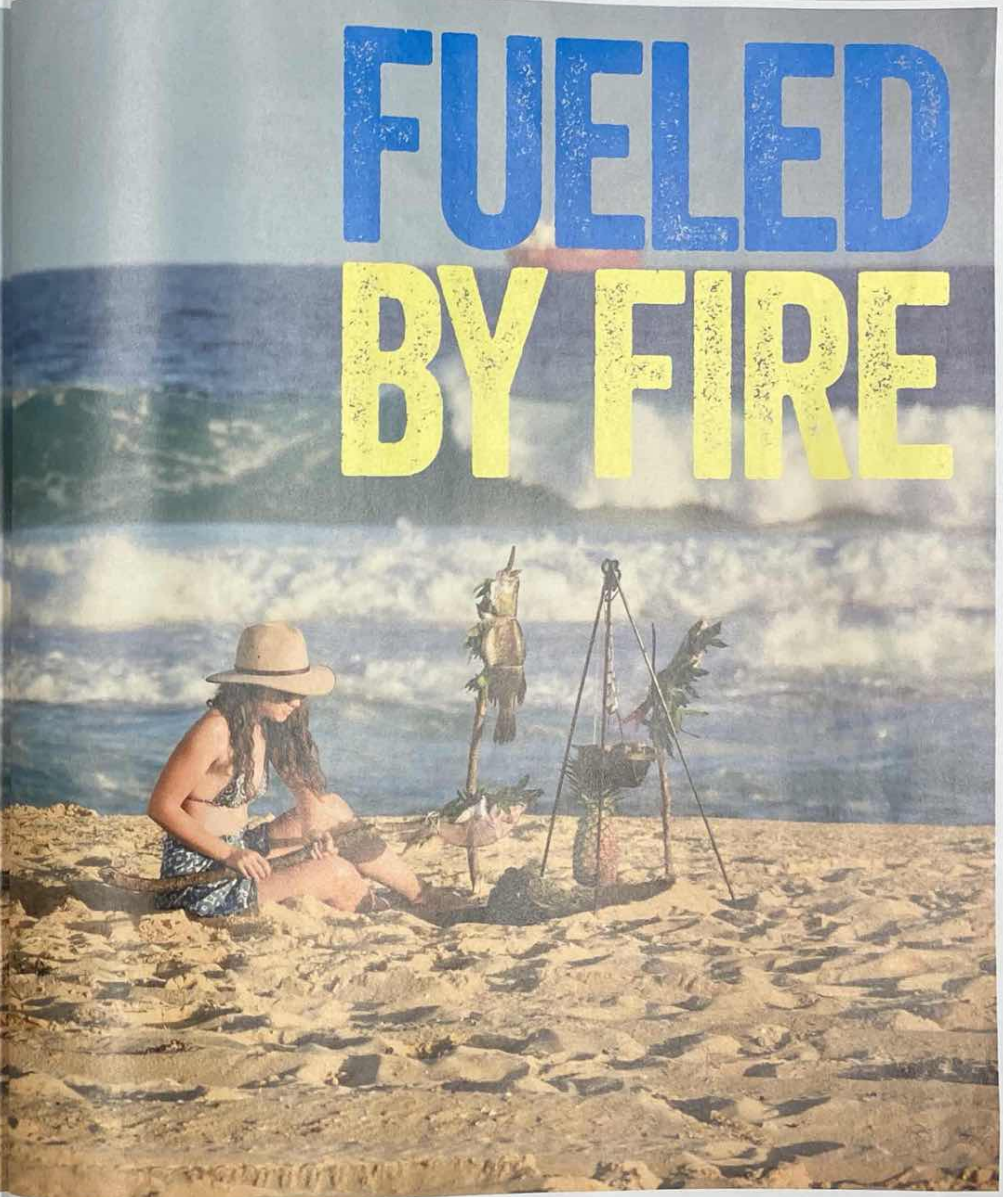
However, developing a fascination for Australia from a young age, and then actually visiting the country via a Fulbright fellowship, Hollingsworth realized she could complete much of her research remotely. This allowed her the opportunity to work anywhere in the world.

Hollingsworth's adventurous side kicked in. An internal fire ignited within her—and has persisted—to change her life forever.

Hollingsworth bought an old Land Cruiser and crossed the width of Australia, east to west ... without using any roads. She navigated her way through some of the world's most remote deserts. Additionally, she explored uncharted rivers in Madagascar, mastered



FUELED BY FIRE



desert transect treks in Namibia and lived with indigenous communities of the Republic of Vanuatu (located 1,750 kilometers, or 1,090 miles, east of northern Australia) to conduct ethnographic research.

Cross-Country Challenges

During her trek across Australia, Hollingsworth would come across a small town or cattle station and load up on fresh goods and other necessities to restock her kitchen.

Right: A drive along the beach will eventually lead to the perfect spot to start a fire for dinner.

Below: Sophie and her mobile kitchen on a beach outside of Sydney

Bottom: Sophie gears up for some paddling at the beach. The FRO braai grille fits securely onto the spare tire.



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"Now, in the middle of the Outback, what is essentially a trip to the supermarket is often more complicated than a typical trip to Trader Joe's," she pointed out. "There are hardly any vegetables, and a small selection of canned foods fetches extraordinarily high prices."

Conversely, the Outback is largely cattle country. It wasn't rare for her to be offered a half or a quarter of a cow for purchase, which Hollingsworth said was "a tad confronting."

Australians in the Outback don't butcher meat in a manner that was familiar to her. But, left with the choice of "overpriced chickpeas that expired half a decade ago or learning how to cook a quarter of a cow over an open fire, I went with the latter," Hollingsworth shared.

Armed with unusual and large cuts of meat, as well as the lack of Internet to give her recipes a bit of butchery guidance, Hollingsworth got creative at camp: She went simple to cook her food.

"After my first experience I realized I no longer needed to be confined to the cast iron cookery that weighed down the back of my Land Cruiser; rather, I figured out that I could—and should—let my creativity flow in how to cook over the fire," she explained.

As a result, Hollingsworth fought through multiple challenges, burned fingers, the simplicity and the adrenaline rush to learn how to cook simply: heritage style.

Connecting to the Process

Food preparation was stripped back to the basics. To her, outdoor cooking is a complete sensory experience. There's nothing like the crackle of wood burning, the warmth of the flames, the smoky smell and the mesmerizing visual display.

"As you connect to the process, your senses work overtime," Hollingsworth added. "Sort of like Indiana Jones-meets-Martha Stewart meals, cooked over the embers of an open fire in the most unexpected of ways."

Being in nature is about simplification: The less you have, the more creative you need to be.

Hollingsworth's favorite style of fire cooking occurs when she's accidentally left her cast iron pot at home. Her primitive camp cooking style evolved "out of necessity over artistic flare." Her seafood-on-a-stick recipe was inspired by western Australian cuisine. She came across a fish too big for her cast iron pans, so she trussed the fish to a stick and





Above, left: Local snapper and barramundi are stuffed with bay and citrus leaves and then trussed to sticks for cooking over the fire.

Above, right: Sea urchins are cleaned and gutted on the hood of the Suzuki Jimny.



"EVERYTHING TAKES LONGER OVER THE FIRE. IN THIS AGE OF INSTANT GRATIFICATION, PEOPLE ARE USED TO MICROWAVES AND STOVES COOKING FOOD IN MERE MINUTES."

the potjie securely in place—just perfect for Hollingsworth's Jimny.)

Potjie pots offer great heat distribution and are super-sturdy. This means less burned food and a cooking vessel that can go from a stove top to an oven and even onto a fire without the worry of melting plastic or silicone knobs. Additionally, potjie pots are cast iron; they don't boast Teflon or other types of nonstick coatings. As Hollingsworth pointed out, those products "inevitably flake off and get into your food; so, no thank you."

Along with trusty cooking plates and vessels, Hollingsworth also suggests owning a high-quality knife and a set of fireproof gloves. Add to that a good set of utensils,

cooked it over a fire. It's now her favorite way to cook fish—simply and creatively.

Cool Camp Cooking

Hollingsworth is a self-professed explorer and food adventure nerd and uses a few favorite cooking vessels. In addition, she takes her Front Runner Outfitters (FRO) braai grill everywhere with her. It's her favorite grill, because the grate fits onto the spare tire of her new Suzuki Jimny. It doesn't take up precious interior cargo space in the diminutive 4x4. The braai grill gives Hollingsworth access to a grill no matter where she goes. She points out that "this makes converting a fire pit into a grill a super-easy process."

Another cooking essential for Hollingsworth is a potjie pot—her favorite that's also from Front Runner Outfitters. A potjie pot is a cast iron pot that camp cooks can put directly over the coals of a fire.

"I adore using them, because they're incredibly durable (they've fallen off my roof rack ... without damage) and can function as a campfire oven by putting coals directly on the lid," Hollingsworth explained. (FRO makes a bracket for the Slimline II roof rack that keeps



Right: Sophie extracts the roe of the sea urchins to eat later.

“... OUTDOOR COOKING IS A COMPLETE SENSORY EXPERIENCE. THERE’S NOTHING LIKE THE CRACKLE OF WOOD BURNING, THE WARMTH OF THE FLAMES, THE SMOKY SMELL AND THE MESMERIZING VISUAL DISPLAY.”

Left: Sophie Hollingsworth cooks fish on sticks over the fire. Hung pineapple smokes over the fire, and homemade bread bakes in a cast iron pan on a beach outside of Sydney.

the moment. Rocks and desert crabs could puncture tires; red bull dust can envelop entire vehicles; and washboard tracks could rattle brains. Just as when cooking over a fire, you have to concentrate while off-roading.

“At first, you’ll inevitably undercook, overcook and drop things in the fire. But that’s life. Enjoy the time in the outdoors and be patient with the fire-cooking journey.”

Everything takes longer over the fire. In this age of instant gratification, people are used to microwaves and stoves cooking food in mere minutes.

“With a fire, that’s simply not the case. Starting the fire and waiting for the wood to burn down to a bed of coals suitable for cooking far surpasses the time most people even devote to cooking their entire dinner,” Hollingsworth pointed out. “Be patient and cook slowly (and enjoy a beer while you’re at it). Fire cooking is always worth the wait.” 🔥

Below: Equipped with Maxtrax at the ready, Sophie is ready for off-road adventure.

and you’re on your way to primal cooking paradise.

“There’s a certain magic that lights up in people’s faces when they see how I’m cooking over the fire,” Hollingsworth commented. “Fire is a primal thing; it’s inside all of us. I think it’s something that makes people dream—whether you’re a king or a peasant, it produces the same feeling.” She loves the “hug” that fire gives, no matter what language is spoken, no matter what the culture is. “Sitting around the fire, you go beyond language to speak something everyone can understand—what fire is and what it brings.”

Combining Travel And Cooking

Part of what Hollingsworth loves about remote, four-wheel driving is the concentration required that keeps travelers living in

