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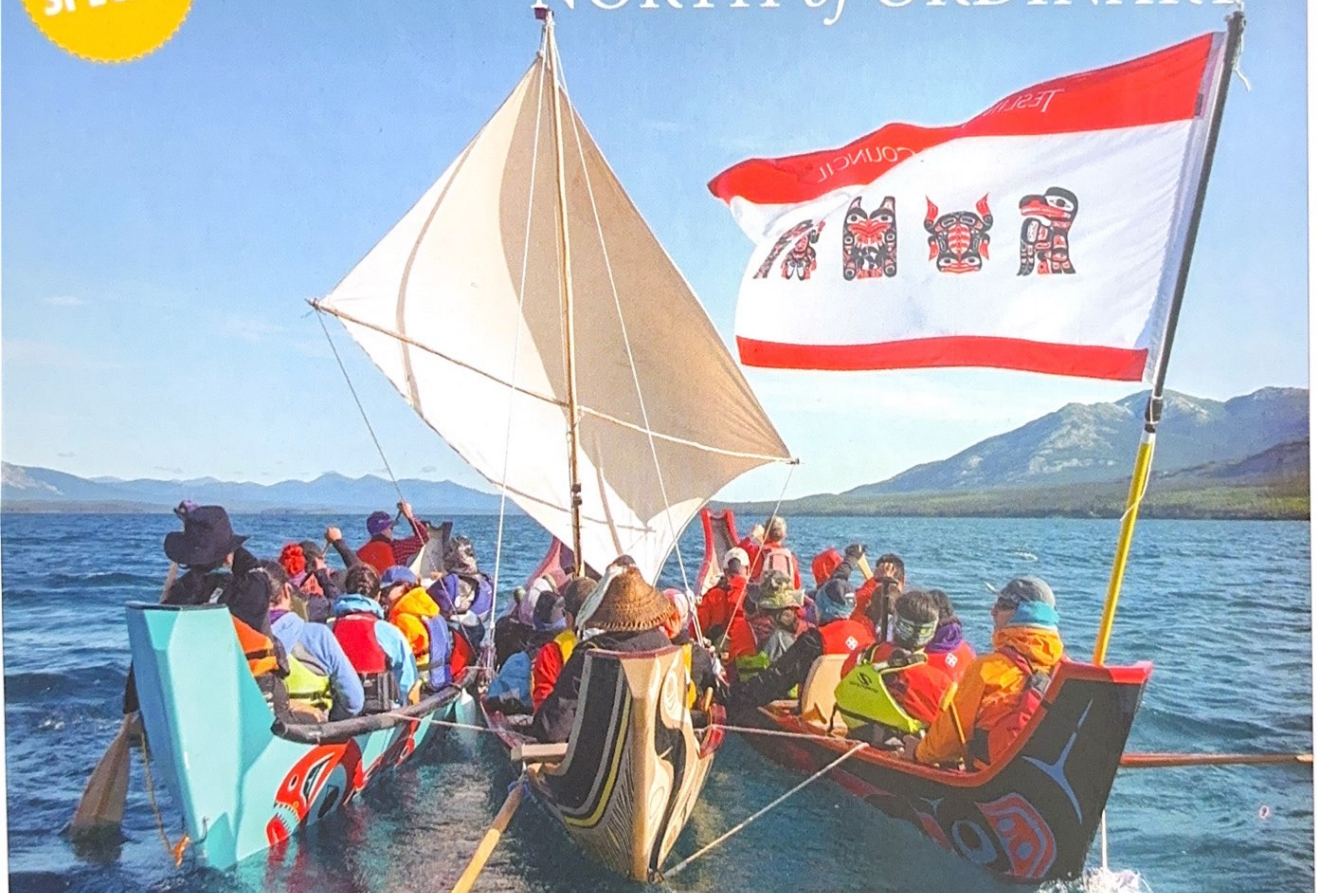
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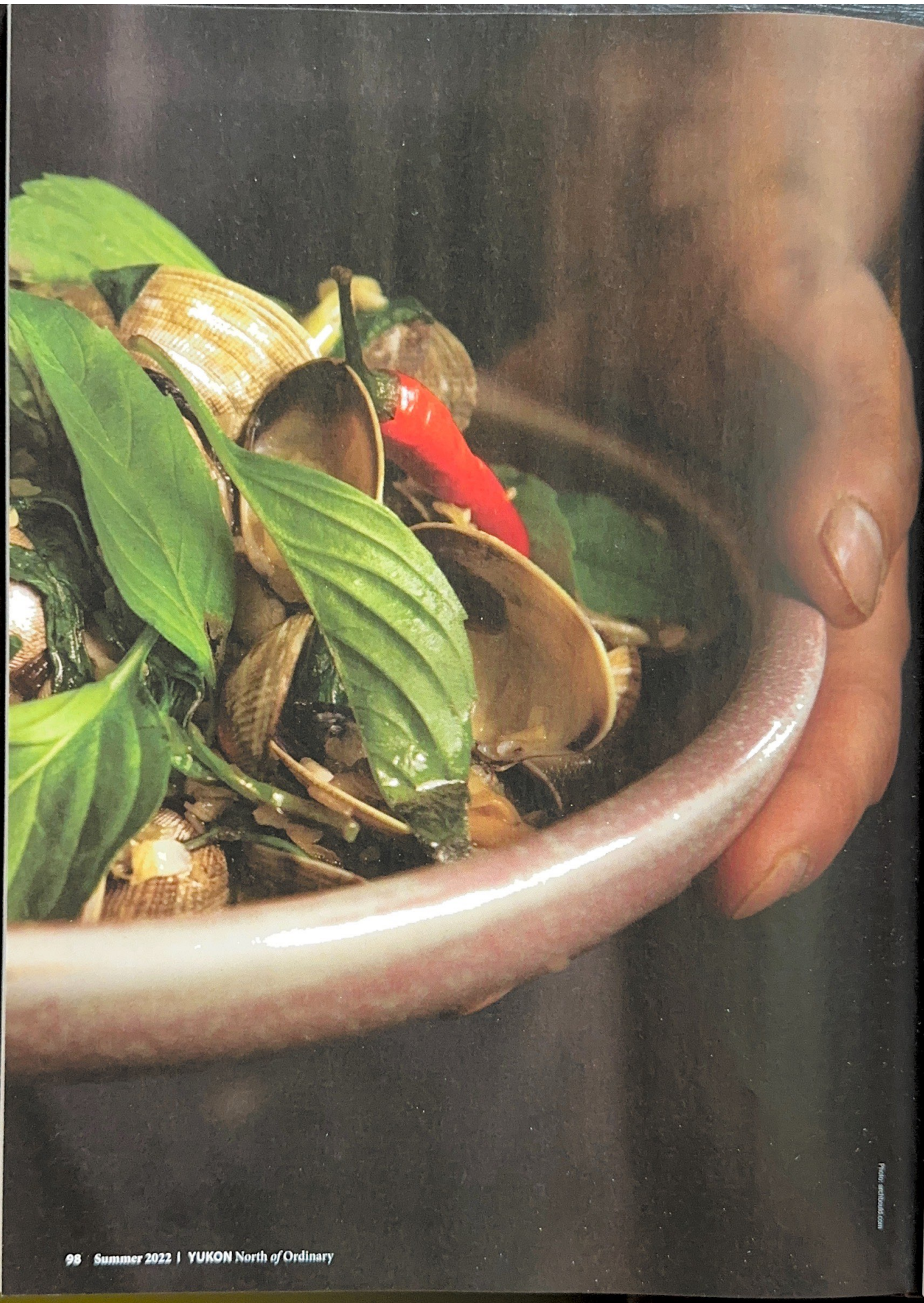
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MEMORIES OF FARAWAY PLACES

Three Yukon chefs revisit their favourite culinary destinations and return with recipes just for us.

By Miche Genest

People, let's hear it for the chefs! For the past two years, under trying conditions, *cuisiniers* and restaurateurs across the Yukon have transported us up, up, and away from the constraints of our pandemic lives. When we couldn't travel, their food and drink swept us abroad, to a souvlaki stand in Athens, or a Kathmandu rooftop to dip *momos* in tomato chutney, or a jetty in Lima where we sipped smoky *pisco* sours. Their imaginations fired ours; they fast tracked us to our own travel memories and prompted us to take flight in our own kitchens, recreating dishes we loved.

It will surprise no one that these inspiring people are inveterate travellers themselves, racking up culinary experience and building the personal repertoire that makes each chef unique.

Chef Troy King, co-owner of beloved Wood Street Ramen and Night Market restaurants in Whitehorse, spent a year in Shanghai cooking at an exclusive hotel restaurant in the financial district. In his time off he would wander the streets with cue cards bearing the names of dishes in Cantonese and walk into restaurants, looking for a meal. One day, on a smoke break outside the hotel kitchen, everything changed.

"I noticed a small hole-in-the wall shop where the locals would go—the room

cleaners, the security guards, the drivers. So, I wandered in there and just never looked back. For \$2.50 or \$3.00 Canadian I'd get a huge bowl of noodles, nice spicy pork noodles."

King became such a regular that when the restaurant staff saw him coming they'd push two or three of their flimsy stools together (as King says himself, he is a big guy) and say, "Sit here! Sit here!" helping King to feel at home. "It was nice," he says.

That welcoming hole in the wall was the inspiration behind the Dan Dan Noodles King serves at Wood Street Ramen and shared with *YNoO*, adapted for "what works for Whitehorse," he says.

Chef Brian Ng of Wayfarer Oyster House, selected as an *enRoute* "Best New Restaurant in 2019," spent a chunk of his twenties wandering the world.

"I traveled basically to go rock climbing and to eat," he says.

Vietnam was particularly alluring—a favourite destination of his culinary hero, Anthony Bourdain, and home to the kind of blended cuisine Ng adores. In the port city of Hoi An, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Ng roamed streets lined with classic French colonial buildings, skinny, ornate Vietnamese tube houses, and wooden Chinese temples. And he followed his nose.

"In my travels, I will wander down random alleyways [that] might not look the safest, but that's usually where the best food is," he says.

In just such a dimly lit alley, Ng found a crowd of men and women gathered around a table at a tiny restaurant and discovered something "magically delicious": a dish of Manila clams.

"I still never really knew what was in them," he says, "so I just tried to reproduce it from my memories."

For chef Ariel Adams at Bonton and Co. in Dawson City, named "Best New Restaurant in 2021" for "Best Tapas North of 60" by *enRoute*, it was a magical trip when she was 13 that inspired her cooking. She travelled from Toronto to visit her older sister in Bella Coola, B.C., who organized a boat-camping trip into isolated waters.

"On the first night we stopped at the estuary on Skowquiltz River... In a matter of minutes our friends had started a fire and set up this incredible cedar bracket [handmade grill basket]," she says. "Someone pulled out a beautiful salmon caught off the boat that day, fileted it, and clamped each side into the cedar brackets, hammered into the ground on an angle, close to the fire. For hours that salmon slowly roasted next to the roaring fire."

Adams describes herself as a "picky pre-teen city kid" who insisted she didn't like fish.

"But I could not stop pulling pieces of that beautiful fish from the bracket."

Much as she loved the fish, though, it was the whole joyous, adventure-rich occasion that stays with her.

May these recipes, gifted by three wonderful chefs, bring the world into your kitchen and you into the world.



Photos: Devon Bernquist

BONTON AND CO. CHEF ARIEL ADAMS' BEET-CURED SALMON GRAVLAX

Chef Adams, who finds preparing a whole fish "captivating," says, "Taking a stunning ingredient and turning it into a special dish that makes people stop and think about how lucky we are to be where we are is important to me."

One 3 lb (1.4 kg) or two 1.5 lb (680 g) wild sockeye salmon filet(s) cleaned, pin bones removed
1/2 cup (120 ml) Kosher salt
1/2 cup (120 ml) granulated sugar
1 tbsp (15 ml) pink peppercorns
1 tbsp (15 ml) coriander seeds
2 large beets, peeled and grated
2–3 bunches of dill

- 1 Toast coriander seeds and peppercorns in a dry frying pan over medium heat. Grind when cool and mix with salt and sugar.
- 2 Cover salmon filet(s) with spice mixture, packing it down. Top with grated beets and pack again. If using two filets, repeat with second filet. Lay dill over top and sandwich between filets.
- 3 Wrap salmon very tightly in plastic wrap. Place a tray with a weight on top. (Adams uses a large jar filled with water.) Leave to cure in fridge for 4–5 days, turning on day two.
- 4 Unwrap and wipe off cure and herbs. Slice thinly on an angle and serve with fresh bread, whipped cream cheese, shaved red onions, and caper berries.

Makes one 3-lb or two 1.5-lb filets of beet-cured gravlax.