

GOURMET

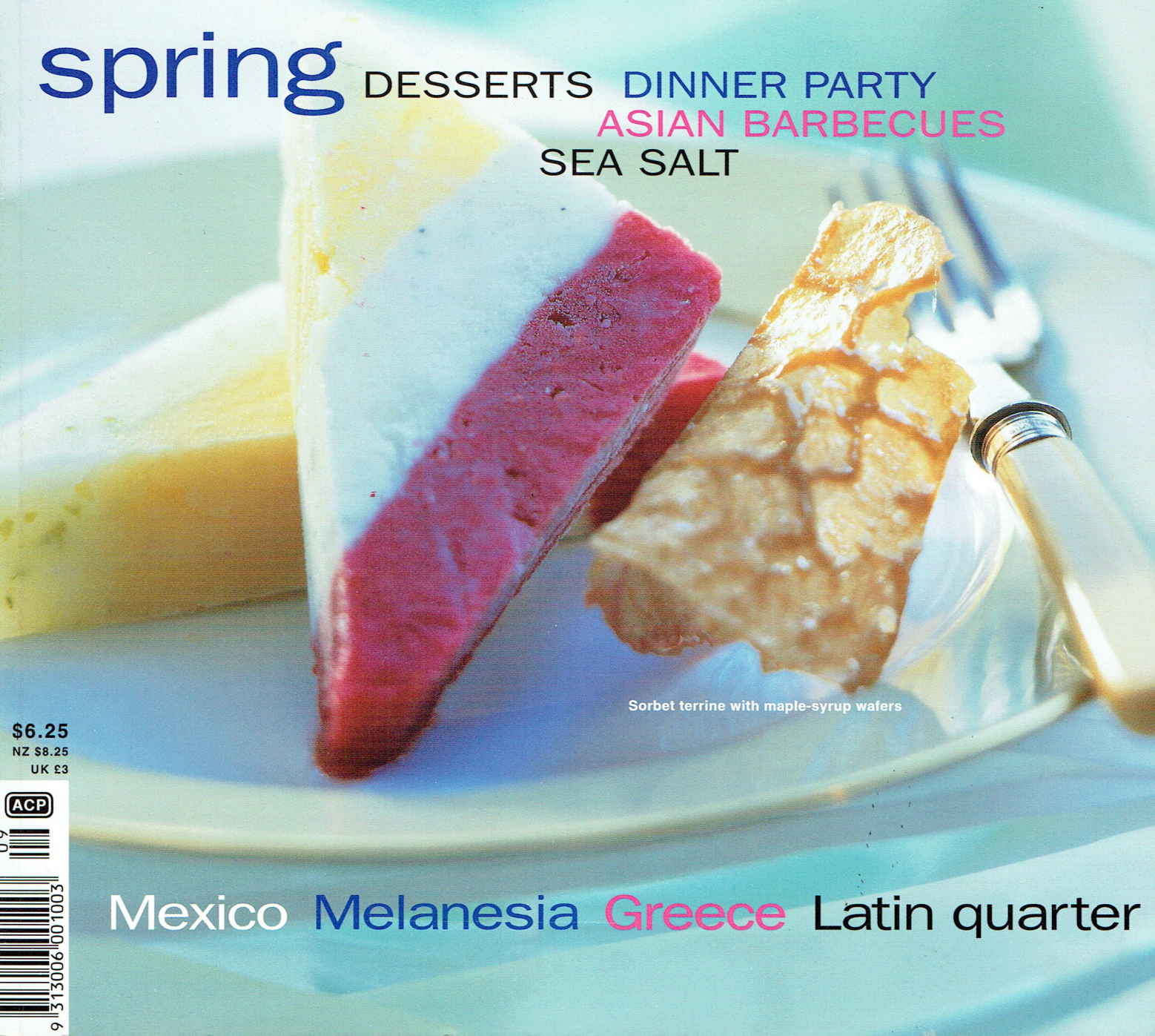
AUSTRALIAN

SEPTEMBER 1999

TRAVELLER

spring

DESSERTS DINNER PARTY
ASIAN BARBECUES
SEA SALT



Sorbet terrine with maple-syrup wafers

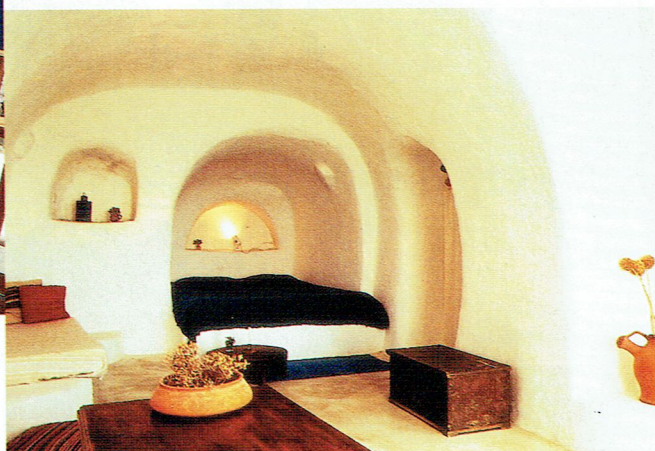
\$6.25
NZ \$8.25
UK £3

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white magic Spend some time in a luxurious cave overlooking the Aegean Sea

NESTLED INTO THE EDGE of a sheer cliff, with breathtaking views of the Aegean, the 16 dwellings that make up Perivolos Traditional Houses in the tiny village of Oia were acquired by the Psychas family during the late 1960s and 1980s. The land and ruins were originally inhabited up to 300 years ago by indigenous fishermen and agricultural workers and the caves used as homes, wineries and stables. Remnants of their original uses have been preserved in the sensitive restorations by the scholar of Santorinian architecture Mary Kavagia and owner Costis Psychas.

Each house has been individually designed and decorated with unique antique artefacts from the Cycladic Islands. Local flowers and naturally dyed, handwoven rugs create an atmosphere of simple elegance. Add the glow of a Greek sunset through the unshuttered window and the cave becomes a work of art.

Inside all is cool white, with only the occasional splash of colour – a hot-red geranium, or orange cactus flowers.

If you can tear yourself away from a pool that seems to flow quietly over the edge of the cliff into the turquoise Aegean, or from the little poolside cafe where you

can have breakfast or lunch, there is a wealth of historical, geographical and visual delights to experience on the island of Santorini.

Earthquake, volcano, war, wind and water have carved the island into a bizarre landscape with endless possibilities for exploration by foot, car, boat, bicycle, bus or donkey. Take a camera and an olive-and-feta picnic to a church perched on the edge of a cliff 350m above the sea. Wander through time-warped, white-washed villages. See uncovered cities, ancient ruins, geographical amazements, ornate orthodox churches, art galleries and museums.

Swim in the Caldera (where, myth has it, the lost city of Atlantis is buried), or relax on one of the island's clear-water beaches. Take a boat ride to nearby islands, swim in the hot sulphur springs, or climb the volcano (still steaming on a good day), which once caused the whole, grand mass of the island to lift out of the sea.

Consume locally grown salads, traditionally pressed wine, and the sea catch of the day. Sip homemade liqueurs on a rooftop cafe, sample *kataifi* (honey-soaked pastries) or *víssino* (spoon sweets) with a fine, rich Greek coffee, and watch the sun plunge dramatically behind silhouetted boats into the darkening sea.

As for the nightlife, choose from a night dancing round (or on) the tables to bouzouki music in a local taverna, or mix it with the party people at one of the diverse dance-until-dawn clubs. Or you could stroll to the *Kastro* (castle) for a spot of romantic star-gazing.

For those who cannot bear to leave the haven of their "cave" for too long, just relax on your private balcony while the sun dissolves behind blue-domed churches and paints the white world pink.

MELISSA BRUCE

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