

# NZHOUSE & GARDEN

INSPIRING HOME LIFE

DECEMBER 2017

THE CHRISTMAS ISSUE

## ALL IS CALM

*Seven fabulous Kiwi homes that channel the holiday feeling*

100+ IDEAS  
FOR YOUR  
BEST  
CHRISTMAS  
EVER

A STYLIST'S  
OWN MAGICAL  
OUTDOOR  
CHRISTMAS  
*page 106*

CHRISTMAS  
MENU SORTED!  
*Cool cocktails*  
*Chic platter food*  
*Egg nog ice cream*  
*page 130*

72  
GIFTS  
TO MAKE  
OR BUY



Entire Media



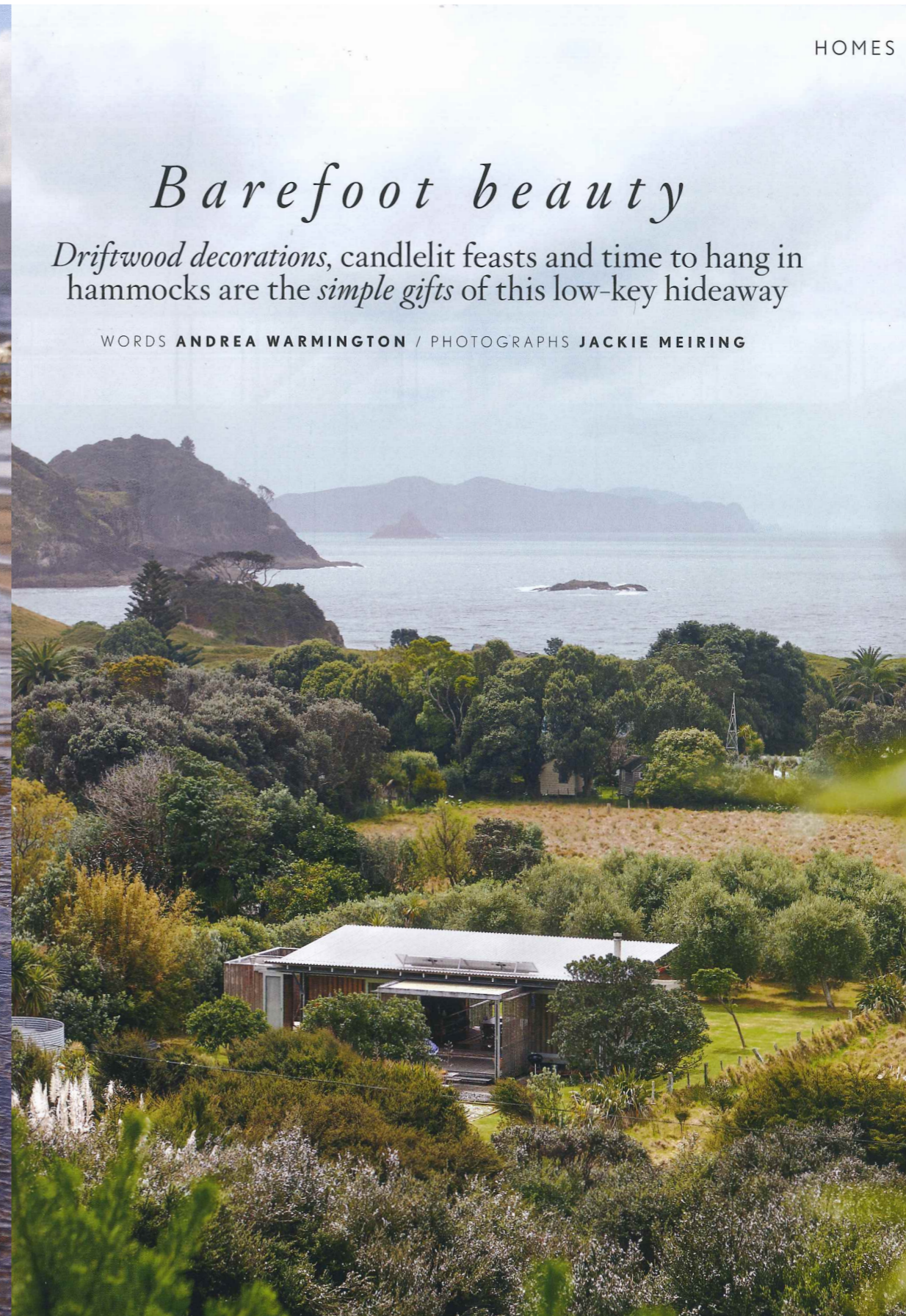
**THIS PAGE** Jackie Meiring and Alex Twigg always decamp to their Great Barrier Island bach for the Christmas holidays; mere minutes away, Medlands beach becomes four-year-old Zara's backyard. **OPPOSITE** When Jackie and Alex found the section there wasn't a single tree – a decade later the established olive grove at the front of the property has just produced its first batch of olive oil, and native bush has been landscaped by Form & Foliage; rainwater collected from the sloping roof is fed into a storage tank.

HOMES

## *Barefoot beauty*

*Driftwood decorations, candlelit feasts and time to hang in hammocks are the simple gifts of this low-key hideaway*

WORDS **ANDREA WARMINGTON** / PHOTOGRAPHS **JACKIE MEIRING**





THESE PAGES Architect Nicola Herbst - Jackie's sister - designed the kitchen bench in the open plan kitchen/living/dining space; the church ornament is from Citta and the white Christmas tree from Pixie Party Supplies; the retro bar stools were found at a squash club and the folding wooden school chairs are from The Boiler Room; the 1970s couch is from South Africa and the picnic blanket was bought at the annual New Year's Day fair on Great Barrier Island. >



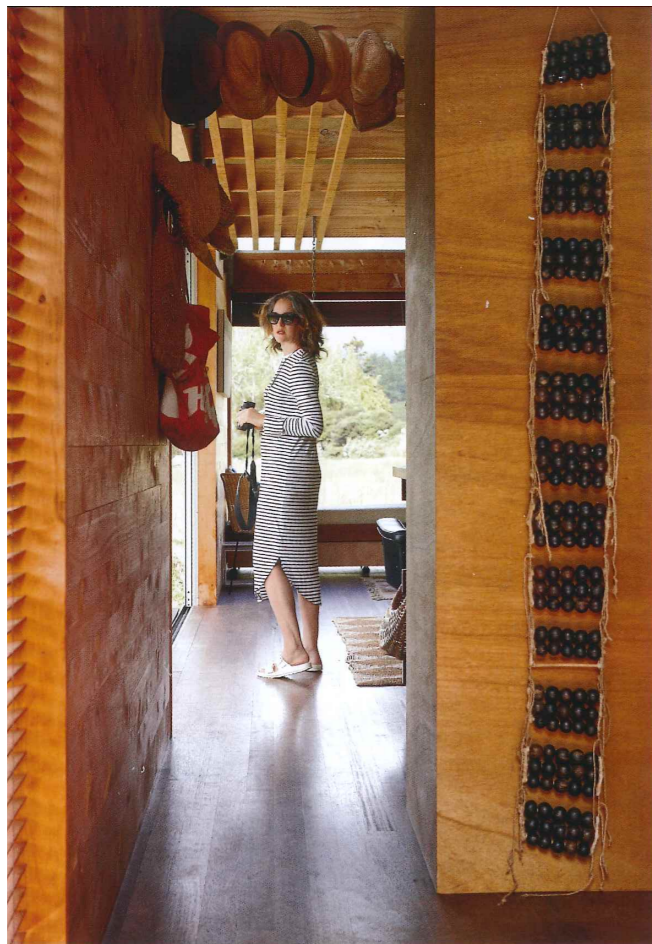
**THIS PAGE** Timber framing in the kitchen has been lined with plywood to create open shelving; a woven kete on the bench is kept stocked with fruit; the collection of hats has been added to over the years "so we're never without!" **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top) Zara draws at the dining table beneath a bamboo candelabra made by Bambusero; a wooden Christmas tree from Plytree decorates the Warrington fire. Jackie's black and white photo of the island's Okwi beach hangs in the living room; Zara's pull-out bed is tucked beneath the day bed. Christmas Day fare is simple, says Jackie, "a caprese salad, Parma ham, ciabatta, and three glasses for the three of us."



**G**ATHERINGS ON Great Barrier Island are always a simple affair, says Jackie Meiring. "When you have a dinner at the beach and you invite friends, we all bring something, because your supplies run low, the shops might not have what you need, so you share. You don't arrive empty-handed. You definitely bring a bottle of what you want to be drinking and a platter of something."

At a recent dinner party held in the olive grove at the bach near Medlands beach, guests even brought their own chairs and there's no doubt that Christmas on the island will be a similarly relaxed occasion. Their little family – Jackie, her husband Alex Twigg and their four-year-old daughter Zara – rarely have a Christmas tree at the bach, preferring to decorate "a beautiful piece of driftwood", says Jackie. And the menu is likely to include some local kaimoana gathered that morning. >





**THIS PAGE** (clockwise from top left) Jackie, binoculars in hand, watches birds from the living area; the wall hanging in the bedroom is made from Zulu ankle beads. New memories are added to the photo wall in the kitchen each year; the tide clock ("very important") and map of the island are frequently referenced. The walls and floors of the bathroom are kwila. **OPPOSITE** A mosquito net from Bambusero hangs from a bamboo frame in the bedroom, which overlooks the olive grove.

**HOW TO HIRE AN ARCHITECT**  
(who's not your twin sister)

*Is it daunting, that first call?* "It's much easier with a personal relationship," says Nicola Herbst, one half of Herbst Architects with husband Lance. And as homeowner Jackie Meiring is her identical twin - "we finish each other's sentences" - their project was easy. But for the rest of us? "Some people have done the process before and they're very relaxed. Some are incredibly well researched with a beautifully written brief, drawings and tear sheets." But if you're not, don't worry. "We don't actually have a formal list," says Nicola, but an architect will know what needs to be decided at an initial discussion. *When to contact them?* "When there's some level of seriousness. About 25 per cent do when they're looking at the land, and we can help at that stage and highlight any issues. Others may have had their site for 40 years."

*The first meeting?* "We're interviewing each other. It's a long process - often two years - so it needs a good relationship, both professional and personal. A spark. A sense of comfort."

*What do you talk about?* "Budget. It's our least favourite thing to discuss but it's best to hit it head on. But the whole sense of the site is everything - unlocking its spirit."

There's usually a caprese salad and a roast - cooked at one of the nearby baches belonging to Jackie's siblings, as their own is without an oven - vegetables from the box that's delivered weekly to the local bus stop and perhaps an Eton mess for dessert. "It's got to be simple because you have to bring everything across and that's a lot of stuff to carry," says Jackie. Keeping the food chilled on the five-hour car ferry from Auckland is another issue. "But you just work around the challenges and make it happen."

You need your "can-do, number-eight-wire attitude" to stay on Great Barrier, admits Jackie. "It's not everyone's cup of tea. You're at the mercy of the weather for coming and going and you do need to plan and take a lot over. But the beauty of Barrier is its rustic-ness."

Jackie, a freelance photographer whose work often features in *NZ House & Garden* (she took the photographs for this story) and Alex, a manager at Auckland's Middlemore Hospital, first visited the island on a trip to New Zealand from their native South Africa in 1998. Her identical twin sister and husband - Nicola and Lance Herbst of Herbst Architects - had already emigrated and built a very basic bach on Medlands beach that, back then, consisted of merely a kitchen, water tower and tents.

"When we moved here, we spent our first summer holidays at their bach," says Jackie. "We fell in love with the Barrier too." >





**THIS PAGE** Alex enjoys an evening drink on the deck beside the fire; open flames are something of a rarity on Great Barrier Island now, but permission is granted when there has been a lot of rain.  
**OPPOSITE** A plywood reindeer from Woodenspoons grazes on the lawn, supervised by Zara.

The pair wanted to be close to family – “that’s why we crossed the world” – so started to look for property. “We couldn’t exactly camp on their site for the rest of our lives.”

They found a clear, 1600sqm section just across the paddock from the Herbsts, who set to work designing a retreat for the couple. “Neither of us is as practical as they are, so we wanted something quite complete, but still very bachy.”

Aotea Bach (named for the island’s Māori name) was finished in 2003. It’s a simple, open-plan design, with just one bedroom and bathroom and no windows, just floor to ceiling sliding doors “so we can open it all up and let the air go through,” exposed cedar walls and two expansive decks. Zara sleeps on the day bed in the living room.

The off-grid bach is powered by solar energy, rainwater is collected in a tank from the gently sloping roof and, although there is a cooktop in the kitchen, most cooking is done on the barbecue. “Part of the Herbst design experience is that you engage with the land and nature and what the sun’s doing,” says Jackie. “You don’t just switch on a whole lot of lights at night. You light candles and use the lighting you’ve generated from solar, but you don’t depend on that. It’s the romance of that.”

The family spends their days swimming and surfing at Medlands beach, where Zara wades in the mermaid pools and helps collect pipi and cockles for the evening vongole. They also enter the annual sandcastle competition (they won one year with their sculpture of Nelson Mandela), or go for walks in the bush.

Q&A

**ON CHRISTMAS MORNING:** We are woken early by our very excited daughter Zara, then I make coffees and a fluffy and we sit in front of our “tree” to unwrap presents.

**THIS CHRISTMAS WE’LL BE EATING:** Something foraged from the shoreline, either mussels or cockles or fish if they are biting.

**MOST TREASURED CHRISTMAS DECORATION:** Collected wooden and beachy decorations. I try to add something every year.

**CHRISTMAS WRAPPING:** Brown paper with a luxurious red ribbon.

**ONE TIP/CLEVER IDEA FOR OTHER HOMEOWNERS:** A few inherited or older pieces add a story and history to an interior.

**BEST PLACE FOR COFFEE:** My hammock under the olives.

**THE THING I WANT TO CHANGE:** I’d like a built-in fireplace on the deck, as fire restrictions mean we are now restricted to a gas Weber barbecue – with zero atmosphere.

Jackie Meiring

Taking care of the bach and the garden is part of the summer experience and the once-bare site now sports a bountiful olive grove – although it had a difficult start. On one particularly windy weekend, every single tree blew over. A neighbour was kind enough to pull each one up with his tractor and Jackie and Alex produced their first crop of oil last summer.

There’s also a native garden that includes nikau and pōhutukawa, designed by Michael Wheatcroft of Form & Foliage, and lettuces and tomatoes are planted over Labour weekend in preparation for the holidays. “You have to sustain yourself to some degree, which is a real pleasure,” says Jackie.

The couple say they feel very fortunate that the island hasn’t been spoiled by too much development. “As soon as you get on the boat or the plane, you feel very disconnected from Auckland. It’s like a cord is cut,” says Jackie. “The sea just washes away the busyness of city life and you become immersed in the quiet gorgeousness of Great Barrier Island.” ■



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