

This page, top to bottom The Oyster Inn's verandah overlooks Oneroa Beach; this way to the three boutique hotel rooms; chef Cristian Hossack; the inn's VW Kombi.

Far right The bar and restaurant interiors were designed by Katie Lockhart. In the bar, a vintage cane settee from Ken Neale in Sydney was re-covered in vintage Japanese fabric.

home-coming

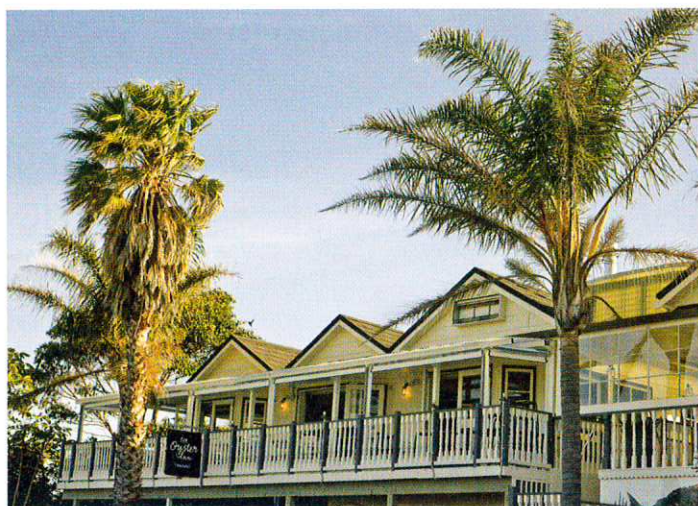
The Oyster Inn – a beautiful new restaurant, bar and boutique hotel on Waiheke Island – represents an exciting reboot for its owners.

TEXT / *Simon Farrell-Green*

PHOTOGRAPHY / *Mark Smith*

Sometimes a place seems so well-suited to its location that you wonder why no one thought of it before, why it hasn't always been there, and – more particularly – how you ever did without it. The Oyster Inn, which opened last month in Oneroa on Waiheke Island, is just that sort of place.

Owned by Andrew Glenn and Jonathan Rutherford Best, the inn is comprised of an airy restaurant and bar (with a beautiful private room), three boutique hotel rooms and a cosy shop selling yellow-and-white Havaianas, resorty beach attire, accessories and straw hats. The inn also sells fish and chips from a small take-away counter off the kitchen. It occupies the top floor of



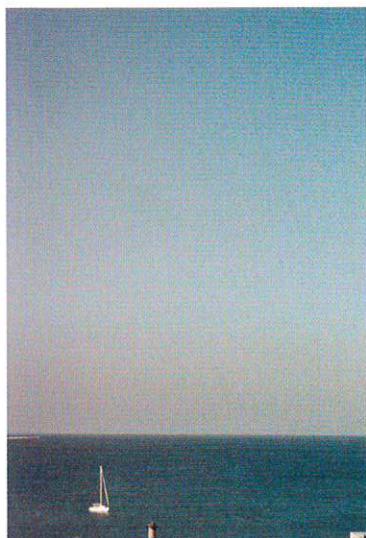


Below left and right
The view from the verandah; a sign points guests towards the beach.

Bottom left The store sells beachware and accessories.

Right The dining room features Thonet bentwood chairs and collections of shells and coral.

Bottom right A sign at the entrance to the inn. The inn's visual identity was designed by graphic design firm Special Group.





Left Vintage French chairs line The Oyster Inn's verandah.

Below left The inn's private dining room, The Pearl Room. The restaurant's vintage French cutlery was sourced by Auckland's The Vitrine.

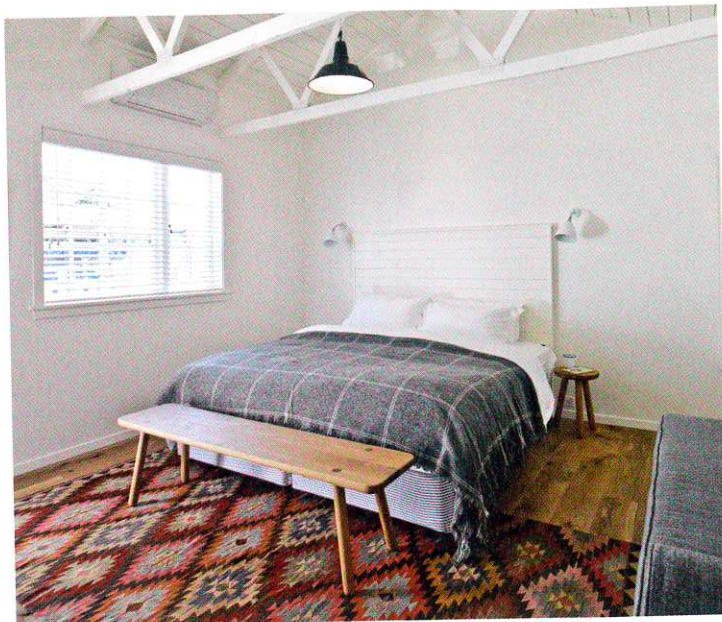


a simple wooden building with exposed trusses, a glorious view out over the bay and the Hauraki Gulf, only a few minutes' walk from the Matiatia ferry terminal, although overnight guests can get picked up at the inn's vintage yellow-and-white Volkswagen Kombi.

Andrew and Jonathan met in London, where Jonathan had co-founded a large catering and event business and Andrew worked in public relations at the likes of Topshop and Louis Vuitton. They both had strong links to New Zealand: Andrew grew up in Hong Kong, but his father is a New Zealander who spent many happy holidays here; Jonathan grew up in Taranaki but had lived abroad for 30 years. Last year, seeking a change, they visited Auckland – Andrew, in particular, had always loved the place. They were immediately struck by the changes in the city, particularly in terms of food and wine. “We thought it would be lovely to come and live in Auckland,” says Jonathan. “Then we came to Waiheke and realised this is where we’d left London for. We wanted a life that was completely different.”

They bought land on which to build a house, and the transformation happened across an abandoned restaurant just off the main street. The view was good, of course, but the place was tired, a rabbit warren of small, close quarters. There had been a succession of restaurants there over the years, with the most recent tenant suddenly abandoning the place, leaving food in the fridge and cutlery on the tables. “It was like the *Mary Celeste*,” jokes Jonathan.

It takes guts and vision to transform something old into something like this. “We wanted a look that was timeless, that would age and get better with time,” says Andrew. The duo hired interior designer Jane Lockhart to oversee the transformation, with lovely results. In the bar, there is a beautiful 1930s cabinet covered with vintage Japanese fabric. In the restaurant, you can sit in Thonet bentwood chairs or comfortable banquettes while tucking into chef Cristian Hurrell's menu, which includes a bounty of locally sourced seafood and produce (Cristian has also returned



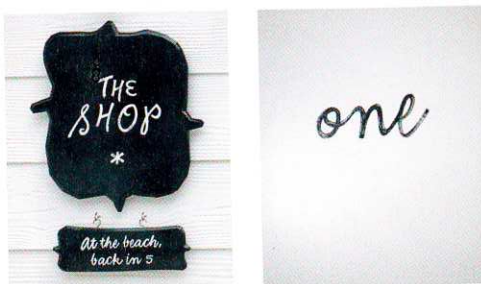
Far left Owners Jonathan Rutherford Best (left) and Andrew Glenn.

Left The guest rooms feature vintage kilims and furniture from English company Another Country.

Below, far left A ramp lined with baskets of ferns leads to the entry of the inn.

Below left Signs for the shop (middle) and Room One (left). One of the Inn's guest bathrooms (bottom left).

Right In the guest rooms, Katie Lockhart chose daybeds and low tables from Another Country. The walls feature a mix of vintage sailing photographs and works by Dan Arps. The vintage kilim is from Melbourne's Loom Rugs.



London, where he was head chef at Peter Gordon's The Providores). The cutlery is vintage French hotelware, solid silver, gathered by The Vitrine's Julien Thery, who spent weeks rummaging through French flea markets looking for the perfect pieces.

Mostly, it was a process of stripping things away. The building itself is nicely simple: exposed trusses and sarked ceilings, all painted white with a navy blue floor. It's the collections of things that make it: there are shells and pieces of coral, and on the walls are a mix of old maps, family photos and serious art by Dan Arps and Tracey Emin. The vintage bistro chairs on the verandah are left with their dented legs and chipped

paintwork – to refurbish them would have made them look too perfect. The whole thing is designed to get better as it gets bashed about. And yet it isn't twee – there are no ropes, no nautical stripes, no telescopes.

In the three boutique hotel rooms, you'll find spare yet warm pieces of furniture from the English firm Another Country, and vintage kilim rugs. "I think we've managed to achieve an airiness that I wasn't sure we'd be able to," says Katie. The sense of pared-back spaciousness in the guest rooms is something that self-confessed "maximalists" Andrew and Jonathan have grown to love – a fresh approach for a duo who are very happy to now be calling Waiheke home. **H**

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