

# TALES FROM THE FIRESIDE!

**Experiments of the Hearth.** *Our explorations in bush cooking first included freshly rolled pastas, flame-grilled vegetables and delicate sauces derived from home-made demi-glace and enhanced with freshly cut herbs from the Mathews Safaris garden. Then Thai cuisine cut a swath through the bush- a happy byproduct of our honeymoon in Asia. We tampered with our more classic sauces and accompaniments, substituting healthier ingredients such as arrowroot powder and cold pressed oils for more traditional fare to heighten flavors whilst limiting the waistline impact. That was the start, and many adventures followed.*

**Wine & Wildebeest.** *This was, perhaps, our most entertaining safari of the past season. Our bush-kitchen brimmed with activity from pre-dawn to well beyond dusk for a week, producing odd and wonderful creations to flirt with grapes from exotic places such as Crocodile's Lair! Spicy prawns, demure duck and plum-basted ostrich bounded steadily from the kitchen to greet wine-lovers from Europe, the USA and South Africa as they merrily made the thrice-daily migration from beast to feast.*

*Wine & Wildebeest was a special gourmet safari, hosted for an award-winning Capetown vintner of superb & spicy Pinot Noir and lovely Chardonnay. The safari paired the winemaker with a renowned South African wildlife photographer for the best weeks of the Great Migration and we could not have had a better setting, nestled in our own grassy glade in the midst of thousands of wildebeest and scores of stealthy cats. I've never seen a safari which so regularly produced leopards, cheetah, lions and spectacular wildebeest crossings. The thrill of the migration fed the laughter around the dinner table, making this one safari I will never forget.*

**A Wok on the Wild Side.** *We attempt a wide variety of international dishes in camp and "interpreting" them for the bush can be challenging. Italian recipes are a mainstay and lend themselves well to being prepared over the fire but we like to splash out from time to time and take full advantage of the great spices, fruits and meats available in Kenya. The spiciest successes of this season were shared between the safari we did for a wonderful family from Malaysia and a camp we hosted for one of Kenya's best guides and his family from the coast. The curries grew more boisterous by the day and we seemed to consume enough fresh ginger and garlic to require an airdrop. If you come to visit, enquire about the "Dancing Elephant".*

**Safari Cocktails.** *Life in a bush kitchen can be entertaining and our team has compiled a shortlist of their favorite kitchen memories. Chef Wambua's favorite has always been the vision of 50 dinner guests filtering through the palms and into Kalacha Oasis in black tie and gowns at dusk, following a charity cricket match in the Chalbi Desert. First on the Baker's list was the sight of Charles, our potbellied Barman, zigzagging with astonishing speed, through a herd of buffalo on his way to the dining tent. My own fondest memory was not one single event but the culmination of many evenings this migration season spent preparing stocks in the open kitchen as elephants and zebra drifted slowly by on the grassy plain. Each camp has its own character but the last of the migration was unique, nestled along a lazy bend on a river with hippos serenading the kitchen each dawn as we lit the coals and prepared for another day on safari.*