

There are no prizes for guessing what's on the menu when David Fryer joins the Omeros clan for lunch.



Photography: Brian Usher

FAMILY FEAST



The Gold Coast is synonymous with fresh seafood and the iconic Omeros Bros Restaurant at Marina Mirage is among the best in the business.

John Omeros is in charge in the kitchen these days, continuing a family tradition started by his father Nick. To find out what goes on behind the scenes at the multi-award-winning restaurant, *Ocean Road* decided to sit in as Omeros prepared a few dishes.

But the restaurateur had a special surprise for us. Instead of inviting us into the Omeros Bros kitchen, he asked us to join him and his family at The White House, on Wategos Beach at Byron Bay.

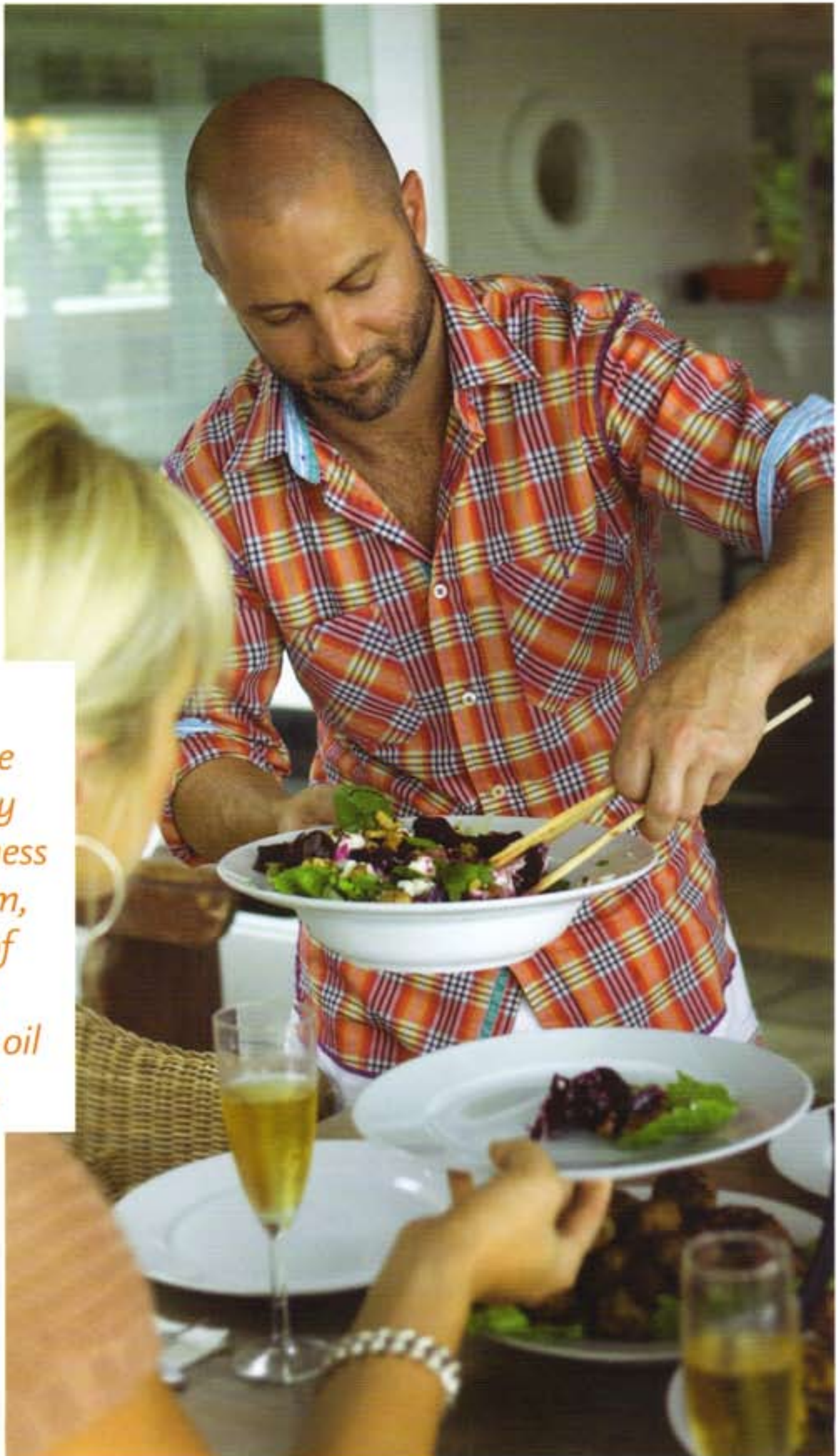
On the weekend we visit, this majestically positioned property with awesome views across the bay to Mount Warning is playing host to the family as they celebrate his sister's birthday. With Johnny's mother, sisters, their partners and kids in attendance, there are plenty of hungry mouths to feed. But the atmosphere is friendly and relaxed as Omeros fires up the barbecue.

I ask Omeros when he started cooking,

"My first job in the kitchen was when I was five," he says. "I used to sit on a crate next to the cold room and when the chefs ran over to go inside I would open it for them and shut it when they were done.

"Dad paid me \$5 a shift. Then I progressed to cleaning prawns and octopus and making garlic bread, then to Oysters Kilpatrick and mornay and so on.

All the dishes have a simplicity and freshness about them, with lots of herbs and good olive oil in the mix.



fami·ly-noun\A person or people related to one and so to be treated with a special loyalty or inti



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“I started my apprenticeship in 1992.”

You can feel John’s passion as he talks about his food and the care he puts into selecting only the freshest ingredients. I’m watching him marinate a bowl of large tiger prawns ready to go on the grill. Lemon zest, fresh sage, oregano and parsley mixed with extra virgin olive oil give a combination of clean, rustic flavours that complement the prawns.

Baby snapper is seasoned, floured and carefully grilled on the barbecue, then comes the famous sweetheart sauce Johnny’s father Nick and his brothers all used. The full-flavoured sauce with parsley, fresh lemon juice, grated onion, extra virgin olive oil and sea salt is drizzled over the beautiful, crisp-skinned fish.

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Like all great chefs, Omeros has a few trusted seafood suppliers who know what he likes but he also visits the trawlers up the road from his restaurant to pick out daily specials from the previous night’s catch.

He puts the success and longevity of Omeros Bros down to a combination of simplicity, consistency and the many years of hard work put in by his father to establish the restaurant and its fine reputation. I think first-class seafood and passion might have a lot to do with it as well.

With the family seated expectantly around a big table decked with a luscious salad, glasses of crisp wine and slabs of grilled ciabatta, the seafood comes off the barbecue.

I can feel a fish feast coming on . . . now, where is my pinot gris?

