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# BACKYARD

Issue No. 3

**TOP 20**  
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# PURE Bliss

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEIGH MORRIS  
STORY PENELOPE BARKER

Throughout her television appearances and cookbooks, chef Dominique Rizzo's mantra has been that healthy pure food is easy to prepare, delicious, tasty, inexpensive and "anyone can do it". Here, Penelope Barker speaks with Dominique about her Brisbane backyard, Sicilian heritage and new Pure Food Wine and Cooking Tours.

## **Were you born in Sicily or Australia?**

I was born in Australia in Brisbane at the Royal Women's Hospital on the first of January, 1972 -- a lovely surprise for my mother and a wonderful start to the new year.

## **What was your backyard/garden like as a child? What was special about it for you?**

I loved my backyard. My grandmother lived with us for many years in a large granny flat under our house in Rosalie in Brisbane. My grandmother, Mardi, was a fabulous gardener and we had a lush backyard with a path through the trees and a hiding place where I used to play and hang out. I remember my mother had a chest full of beautiful vintage clothes. I used to play dress ups and then wander around the yard and to this day I still love vintage clothes.

## **What led you to become a chef?**

I had always loved cooking and from a very early age I was making breakfast for my parents and baking cakes and biscuits. Our family

trips to Italy inspired my love for Italian food, fresh produce, big family meals and bold flavours.

During my school days, my favourite subjects were art, drama, language and home economics. I took a few trips to Italy when I left school and came back to complete a Diploma in Business Hospitality. I discovered that I loved the food component. Since I was about 10 years old I was working part time in restaurants, clearing tables, then working in kitchens. Food and hospitality was all that I knew, so at 21 I asked myself that question -- what am I going to do with my life and my own answer was that I know and love food. I got an apprenticeship and the rest is my life.

## **What influences your food and what inspires your passion for pure and healthy cooking?**

Flavours, textures, colour, multiculturalism, the foods that I love to eat, ingredients and ideas I find on my travels, the desire to help people feel confident with creating healthy tasty food, my mother, my father, other chefs, amazing local produce are all the aspects that influence my food.

My passion for pure, healthy cooking is inspired by my desire to be healthy myself and to inspire others by creating a mantra that healthy pure food is easy to prepare, can be delicious, tasty, inexpensive and anyone can do it.

## **What was your garden like when you moved to your current home?**

A backyard of weeds. It was just one huge patch of grass and weeds. I later found out that I actually had a yard of edible weeds... go figure. Although it wasn't until I had mowed it all down and transformed it that I found out.

## **What has inspired the design and planting of your backyard?**

I wanted a yard that was a feature as I walked into the house, that was very user friendly, easy to maintain and had an aspect of edibility so I could use most of it in my cooking. Typical woman -- I wanted everything: the Bali feel, the cottage garden, the wild garden. It still needs a little work but gardens are always a work in progress.

## **What have you included that is really important to you?**

I love figs, pomegranates, citrus, grapes, herbs and leaves for salads so I have included a lot of these. Also I love to lie in the garden and just look around so my lounge and hammock come in handy.

## **I notice lots of interesting creative ideas.**

Recycled timber that was wired together to create the borders of the gardens, a mismatch of bits and pieces to make a chicken coop, things that I had purchased to go into the house that ended in the garden, a couple of old stands and recycled timber I have as a table for plants -- there are lots of bits and pieces, I am a fan of buying plants at garage sales and also picking pieces of furniture off the street.



“I wanted a yard that was a feature as I walked into the house, that was very user friendly, easy to maintain and had an aspect of edibility so I could use most of it in my cooking.”



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**“I wanted everything: the Bali feel, the cottage garden, the wild garden. It still needs a little work but gardens are always a work in progress.”**

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### **How do you like to entertain in your backyard?**

Often, we will take a bottle of wine and an antipasto platter in the yard and sit under the gazebo. In winter I have a huge wok that I bought at a garage sale that I fill with coals and I light that for an outdoor fire, while in summer it's used as a huge ice bucket. The garden gets used for pre-dinner drinks, before settling onto my deck.

### **Are you married? Any children?**

No I am not married and do not have children. I do have two cats, Muffin and Coco, and four chickens. My 74-year-old father, Vince, lives with me and a lovely house mate, Rachael. My brother and his fiancé live next door and we all get together with my mum and other brother and his family for big family dinners.

### **Could you tell me a little about your work as an ambassador for Lindemans and Gourmet Garden?**

I have been working for both for about four years now and I love both these companies. With Lindemans wines, I write recipes and blog posts, and do their cooking demonstrations for the Melbourne Flower and Garden Show and also Floriade in Canberra, cooking in the beautiful Lindeman's Open Garden. I promote their lighter style Early Harvest Wines and complement them with my recipes.

Working with Gourmet Garden, I love using their herbs as they are so convenient and even though I have fresh herbs growing I always fall back on some of the Gourmet Garden varieties. I also write recipes and blog posts, run cooking classes and appear on TV commercials for Gourmet Garden.

### **Could you tell me about your Pure Food Wine and Cooking Tours?**

My tours were a dream that have finally come to fruition after 20 years. I specialise at the moment in small group, personalised food, wine and cooking tours to Sicily, with up-coming tours to Greece, Germany, Puglia and other regions of Italy. I know that I was born into hospitality and for me to be able to share what I love about Sicily with other like-minded travellers is truly wonderful. I wanted to create tours that take people a little off the tourist tracks, and really taking care of everything so that all anyone needs to do is sit back and enjoy. I started the tours in 2012 after about four years in the planning. I love people, talking to and meeting new

people. I love food, discovering new foods and love sharing, so for me I felt it was just a natural aspect of my business to fall into. I have just completed my website which I am so proud of and am hoping to continue to offer escorted and also guided tours to many more places. I have always loved travelling and many times have travelled both on my own and with friends and family. I love the world and I want to be part of it and open the doors for others to be part of it also.

### **What unique experiences can travellers on your tours expect?**

Meeting local characters, and experiencing cooking classes that are not just designed for tourists. I want people to experience the real Sicily, its good and perhaps not so good, but that's the beauty of travel. We visit a private museum where one man has recreated a mini Sicily using only recycled objects that he has found around the streets. We visit local local cheese makers who don't get tourists wandering in. We share dinner with local families, enjoying not only their expert cooking skills but their wonderful hospitality. We get to venture into local churches, go underground into crypts and ancient baths and really experience just that little bit more.

### **What great food and wine experiences can be found in Sicily?**

We taste fresh warm ricotta straight from the copper pot, fresh bread from the olive branch wood fire and handmade sweets made to 100-year-old recipes by an 80-year-old signora who still rolls the cannoli by hand. We taste marsala only aged for private family members, slow food and local ingredients and the traditional chocolate brought from Mexico and made only in Modica. We taste Malvasia, a traditional island dessert wine, the freshest cannoli in Sicily in a tiny town that you would miss if you blinked, fresh seafoods that have never hit our shores, chickpeas straight from the plant and an array of other delicacies. Oh, and of course some of the best wines from the Mt Etna region.

### **What do you take home from your own travels to your cooking and your garden?**

For my garden I want to always recreate those lush balcony gardens spilling over with geraniums of all colours. In my garden I want the wild fennel, artichokes, herbs and those gorgeous tomatoes that we just don't seem to get here and prickly pear, which almost takes over everything so I am not sure about that one.

For my cooking, I bring back ingredients such as salts, herb mixes, ideas for products, sauces and lots of new ideas for simple cooking...the Sicilians truly invented the simplicity of cooking. They may not be able to lay claim to the ingredients as most of what you find in Sicily has been brought there by the Greeks, Arabs, Romans and even the French and Spanish, but the Sicilians showed them all how to perfect the cooking, showcasing these beautiful ingredients and really demonstrating the food and talents of the people and the bounty of the land.

For more information, visit [www.purefoodcookingtours.com.au/](http://www.purefoodcookingtours.com.au/) ■



# Outdoor Entertaining With

## Dominique Rizzo

PEP UP YOUR NEXT OUTDOOR EVENT WITH THESE DELICIOUS, EASY TO PREPARE RECIPES DOMINIQUE HAS PREPARED ESPECIALLY FOR READERS OF YOUR FANTASTIC BACKYARD.

### My Garden Life Salad

As I was plating up this salad I was all smiles knowing that my somewhat basic gardening skills had produced such a bounty of greens, eggs and herbs to create this stunning salad. If you have other greens, herbs and leaves that you would like to add then go right ahead. The crunch of the fried artichokes gives this a wonderful texture and paired with the olive oil croutons, there were flavours and textures flying everywhere in my mouth.

#### SERVES 4

#### INGREDIENTS

200g shelling peas  
1 zucchini, peeled into ribbons  
2 artichokes  
1 cup olive oil for frying  
4 cups of mixed leaves such as sorrel, endive, lettuce, nasturtiums, pineapple sage flowers, basil, parsley, rocket  
3 organic or your own chook eggs  
1 ½ cups chunky bread crumbs  
¼ cup virgin olive oil  
Zest of 1 lemon  
Juice and zest of 1/2 lemon

#### METHOD

Blanch the peas in a saucepan of boiling water for 2-3 minutes and refresh in cold water, drain and set aside.

Prepare the artichokes by peeling off the outer 2 layers of leaves. Cut about 1/3 from the top of the artichoke and with a spoon remove the fluffy section in the middle. Cut the artichoke into eighths. Have ready a bowl of water with half a lemon squeezed in as the artichokes will tend to discolour. Immerse the artichoke pieces and allow to sit in the lemon water for about 5 minutes. Drain and then fry in the hot olive oil until crispy and golden. Drain on a paper towel.

Fry off the chunky crumbs in the same oil until golden, set aside on paper towel to drain. Place some plastic wrap in a small ramekin or dish, crack in an egg and then tie up the plastic very tightly around the egg and immerse into simmering water for about 8-9 minutes until you see that the white and yolk are just cooked. Remove and allow to cool slightly.

Arrange all of the greens, herbs and peas onto a platter. Remove the eggs from the plastic and gently break them open over the salad. Scatter over the ribbons of zucchini.

Make up your dressing with 2 tablespoons of herb and olive pesto (recipe follows), juice of half a lemon and a splash of olive oil, season with a little salt and pepper and drizzle this over the salad, topping it off with the lemon zest, fried artichoke and crunchy croutons.





# Baked Ricotta with Almonds, Figs & Orange Syrup

I loved eating this as I sat in my garden looking at my fig tree and knowing that one day I too would have these luscious, exquisite fruits hanging heavy on my tree. This dish is a wonderful way to enjoy ricotta as either a dessert, for breakfast or as my father likes to have it with his morning cup of tea or coffee and some toasted bread. Figs when they are in season are a must to try, eat and cook with and my favourite way to open them is with my fingers, revealing that soft pink array of flowers inside.

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## SERVES 6-8

### INGREDIENTS

1 x 250g small wheel of ricotta  
4 figs – 2 sliced thickly and 2 torn or cut into quarters  
1 egg white  
¼ cup of almond flakes  
1 dsp brown sugar  
Zest of 1 orange  
3 tblsp orange marmalade  
2 tblsp sugar  
¼ cup water  
Toasted bread for serving

### METHOD

Preheat the oven to 180 degrees Celsius. Brush the outside of the ricotta wheel with the egg white and then roll in the almond flakes to cover the sides. Sit the wheel onto some baking paper on a tray and then top with the sliced figs and sprinkle with the sugar. Bake for 20 minutes.

In the meantime, place the orange rind, marmalade, sugar and water into a small pot and bring to a simmer, cooking the syrup until slightly thickened.

Toast the bread and serve alongside the baked ricotta with syrup and more fresh figs on top.







# SPACE STATIONS

With the introduction of relaxed government regulations on building second dwellings in our backyards, and a growing choice of self-contained studios, cabins and even small houses that fit the bill, the time is ripe to add extra living space to your home affordably and easily.



**A** backyard studio is a self-contained cabin or small house which is built in the backyard of an already existing house (the principal house).

The recent changes to NSW legislation, with the introduction of the Affordable Rental Housing State Environment Planning Policy (SEPP) in 2009, allows a backyard studio to be built as a second dwelling on properties. Since these changes, backyard studios have become a popular solution for extended families, newlyweds, elderly people, retirees, work-from-home executives and most of all property investors. There are now a wide range of backyard studio designs available that comply with the regulations and many offer quick, easy, affordable and sustainable building systems that allow you to add a second studio or dwelling to your property within as little as three weeks from ordering it.

The conversion of garages into illegal granny flats is now a thing of the past since approval for backyard dwellings can be given either as a Complying Development or Development Application (DA).

## COMPLYING DEVELOPMENT

In 2009, the NSW Government released the Affordable Housing State Environment Planning Policy (SEPP) which permits all residential home-owners with a property larger than 450m<sup>2</sup> (which also has a minimum 12m street frontage) to build a cabin or small second dwelling on their property.

With this change comes a new way of processing granny flat and backyard studio applications. Home-owners wanting to build a backyard dwelling are no longer required to obtain council approval as long as their application meets the minimum Complying Development requirements that have been set out. For more information, visit the NSW State Government website and click on the NSW Government Granny Flat Fact Sheet.

If your property is considered to be a Complying Development then the easiest and quickest way to have your plans approved is through independent Private Certifiers who are authorised to approve backyard studios in as little as 10 days.

If your property does not meet all the conditions required to be a Complying Development, your granny flat can still be approved with a Development Application (DA) lodgement, which can only be approved by your local Council.

Whether you need a backyard room or dwelling for your grandparents, parents, children, newly-weds, extended family, teenagers or simply as an office or an investment there is now a flexible and affordable solution for each of these needs.

If you live outside of New South Wales, check your State Government website or contact your local Council to find out how the new regulations apply in your region.

## HOW YOU CAN USE YOUR BACKYARD CABIN

A backyard cabin is a great solution for property investors wanting to increase their rental returns from investment properties. This is possibly the most cost effective and high return investment

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Whether you need a backyard room or dwelling for your grandparents, parents, children, newly-weds, extended family, teenagers or simply as an office or an investment there is now a flexible and affordable solution for each of these needs.

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opportunity for landlords who own an investment property to generate more income and increase the value of their property.

A backyard cabin is a great solution for home owners who want to generate additional income to either pay off their existing home loan faster or just earn some extra spending money. With rental returns so high during the current housing affordability crisis, a backyard cabin is a great way to generate extra revenue for a relatively small outlay. Or if you want to downsize, you can move into the new cabin while renting out the main house.

Additionally, a backyard cabin has been shown to add value to the overall property, so when it comes to selling your house you will be sure to achieve a much higher selling price.

A backyard cabin is a great solution for elderly accommodation. With people now living longer than ever before, a backyard cabin is a great solution for those who want to keep their elderly parents or grandparents close to keep an eye on them, while maintaining their independence and privacy.

With the energy bills and the general cost of living rising to new highs every year, a new backyard cabin is a great solution to allow your loved ones to enjoy all the benefits of small home comfort with all the modern conveniences that is easier and cheaper to maintain.

A backyard cabin is a great solution for single parents and young couples who haven't saved enough money for a deposit for their own property due to the cost of houses rising year on year. With deposits becoming harder to save for, here is an opportunity to get into your first brand new home, in the form of a comfortable modern cabin in Mum and Dad's backyard, while still being totally independent. The good news is that in most cases you only need about \$10,000 - \$15,000 deposit.

A backyard cabin is a great solution for extended families. With intergenerational living becoming a trend, a backyard cabin is a unique and cost effective way of providing additional housing for family members, without having to move house or endure a disruptive renovation. By building a backyard cabin, you can add an extra 2-3 bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen, laundry and living



## Backyard Room

Launched in March this year at the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show where it won the sustainability award and the silver award for best garden, Backyard Room is an innovative new offering from architectural practice Archiblox.

Whether it's a home office, studio or exercise room, Backyard Room has the potential to unlock a world of possibilities in your backyard.

With one in 10 people now working for themselves and one in 12 paid workers working a couple of days a week from home, Backyard Room taps into a need for people to find a space to work that is separate to home but saves on costs such as office rent and commuting.

"These days whether people are working from home, starting their own business or doing creative projects, we know the importance of having a space that is removed from the hustle and bustle of the family home," says co-founder and architect Bill McCorkell. "At Backyard Room we are offering that space which is architecturally designed, sustainable and cost effective."

These stylish structures are fully pre-fabricated, meaning a backyard studio is delivered within a four week turnaround and clients avoid the fuss and inconvenience of construction in their yard.

"For more difficult sites, the backyard room arrives in a flat pack and we install it on-site in under four days – it's a simple process that we manage every step of the way," says co-founder and builder David Martin.

Passive solar design, sustainable materials, water conservation and energy efficiency all contribute to a garden room that achieves an at least Six Star Green Star rating.

Backyard Rooms come in a range of designs, sizes and prices. The compact 'WorkPad' is 2.2 x 2.4 metres and starts at \$15,840, while the 'BYR3' is 6.9 x 3.3 metres and starts at \$68,000.

Visit [www.backyardroom.com.au](http://www.backyardroom.com.au) for more information.



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A backyard cabin has been shown to add value to the overall property, so when it comes to selling your house you will be sure to achieve a much higher selling price.

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area in most cases cheaper than the cost of an extension, while keeping your family together.

Some homeowners require the additional space (similar to a studio apartment) for their older children who just aren't yet ready to move completely out of home but at the same time want their independence and privacy. Plus you get the chance to make some extra money when the kids finally do move out.

A backyard cabin is a great solution for a home office. Why buy or rent a commercial office, when you can build a home office in your backyard for much less, and work from home in your own office. In today's modern technological world,

working from home is becoming more popular and a great way to improve your work / life balance plus you won't have any rent costs, travel expenses, tolls, car expenses or annoying traffic to contend with.

A brand new home office can be built in your own backyard for a fraction of the cost of a commercial office, while saving you money on all the other expenses and strata fees. The cost to build your home office can be used a tax deduction. Ask your accountant for professional advice.

A backyard cabin is a great solution for hobby and multi-purpose rooms. For instance, parents may need a sanctuary to get away from the noise of the main house or possibly to move the noise (and noisemakers) out by giving them their own retreat.

Why not build that pool room, teenager retreat, rumpus room, music studio, a games or chill-out room you have always wanted? Or if you need the space to get away, why not build your own hobby room where you can get away and relax and do what you enjoy most, whether it is sewing, painting, reading, arts and crafts, model making or whatever your hobby may be.

Whatever use you would put a backyard studio to, there's a design to suit your needs. The following examples are just a selection of what's available. ■





## Happy Haus

Happy Haus came about when a happy guy was building his first home. With a perfect block of land in Brisbane's Paddington and leading architects Donovan Hill designing a perfect pad, he thought he would be the happiest man alive. But, as the project went on the experience started to make him unhappy.

With extended timeframes, building budget blowouts and no home to sleep in, he started to understand why so many people are stressed and unhappy when building homes. So instead of being unhappy about it, he decided to come up with a happy solution to fix the problem for his neighbours and future generations.... hello Happy Haus! He had heard of 'modular' homes before, but in Australia it seemed to be a dirty word that conjured up images of dodgy caravan style homes. But what if he could combine convenience with design, making beautiful homes that can just get delivered to your door? He thought if the Germans and Japanese are doing it, it must be good!

He partnered with Donovan Hill to design the first Happy Haus range, which created excitement across the nation. As everyone's budgets became increasingly tighter in unhappy economic conditions, people were looking for a cost effective answer for dream homes and extensions.

Now, with five architects on board, there is something to suit everyone's needs and tastes whether it be a brand new home, studio, office, display or extension for a growing family, there is a happy solution to be found and a happy team member to help you on your happy journey.

Happy Haus believes the home is where the happiness is. Australia is home to some of the world's best architects, but sadly they design only 3% of Australian homes. But, we understand that some people who appreciate beautiful design can't always afford it.

Happy Haus wants to spread the happiness and make owning a dream home designed by an architect a possibility for everyone - high quality need not cost a fortune.

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For more information, visit [www.happyhaus.com.au](http://www.happyhaus.com.au)

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