

VOGUE

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my favourite table



JAMES HOUSTON
AT PUBLIC

Now a resident of the Big Apple, Australian photographer James Houston still seeks out flavours from home, and at the critically acclaimed Public, he's found the catch of the day

New York may be a long way from Sydney, but photographer James Houston has discovered his own corner of the Antipodes in bustling Manhattan. Brad Farmerie is the chef at Houston's favourite eatery Public, and although Farmerie's originally from Pittsburgh and studied mechanical engineering, he worked with Kiwi chef and restaurateur Peter Gordon at The Sugar Club in London and subsequently spent time travelling extensively throughout Australia and New Zealand, where he picked up plenty of local knowledge.

"Being an Australian over here, you do tend to find out about the places that cook food that's very similar," says Houston, who's been resident in New York for six years. "Friends told me about Public. They actually serve kangaroo here."

On his reasonably regular fortnightly visits, Houston finds it hard to go past the grilled scallops, which are served with sweet chilli sauce, crème fraîche and green plantain chips. "The grilled prawns [pictured above] are good too," he adds. "And they do a great New Zealand snapper."

The ambience of the restaurant is also something that attracted Houston. "I think lighting is key," he says. "If you look good in a restaurant, you're going to come back. Public has a nice, rustic feel, but it's also quite minimal."

Although he misses some aspects of food from home – "the Asian fusion is really good in Australia, and the food's so lovely and clean" – there are upsides to living in the States: "Every time I go to LA, I run to a Mexican restaurant. I love Mexican food and it's something that isn't necessarily done that well in Australia."

When he returns to Sydney, Houston has a list of destinations that are on his eating agenda: "At breakfast it's Bills and Aqua Bar, lunch is definitely at Sean's Panorama, and for dinner it would either be Billy Kwong or Jimmy Licks."

It's also Australian foodies he turns to when looking for inspiration the rare times he cooks. "All my cookbooks are by Bill Granger and Donna Hay. I do a really good baked chicken." James Houston's latest book *Move* (powerHouse books, \$99.95), published to raise funds for, and awareness of, HIV/AIDS, is available from book stores. Public, 210 Elizabeth St, New York, +1 212 343 7011, public-nyc.com. ve+T