

HOUSE AND LEISURE

A weekend with
MasterChef SA judge
Pete Goffe-Wood

STYLISH SA AT HOME AND PLAY

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open season

A long love of wildlife and the natural beauty of the area informed the remodel of this warm Karoo farmstead

Text **Catherine Kowalski** Styling **Jeanne Botes, Jean-Pierre de la Chaumette** Photographs **Greg Cox**



Peter van Wyk is helping this former sheep farm in the Karoo slowly revert back to its natural state. Left to nature for the past seven years, the landscape and birdlife are beginning to improve. There are even rumours of leopard.

Friends have arranged dried aloe stalks around the light fitting (from Morgan Associates, morganassociates.co.za) that hangs above the dining table.





CLOCKWISE The dresser in the kitchen was left behind by the previous owners; in the same room, Peter tends to the fire; a wrought-iron day bed on the front stoep is strewn with cotton lambas from Madwa (madwa.com).



For some, the Karoo represents an endless dusty landscape, best flown over or driven through at speed. But if you've explored this ancient place a little deeper, it's likely you'll have found it compelling. Entering it is like entering the past, when a day was plotted by the position of the sun and activities by the seasons – forcing you to take things slowly. The complete stillness is astounding. Without cellphone reception and, often, electricity, you begin to connect with nature. It is an ideal place to escape and recharge.

In just such a spot, on Blaauwheuvell, a farm 70km from Sutherland near the Tankwa Karoo National Park, property developer, project manager and nature enthusiast Peter van Wyk has created his personal piece of paradise. 'Without fail, the moment I turn onto the last 30km of dirt road the excitement in the car mounts,' says Peter. 'It's not just me; the dogs sense it, too.'

Having grown up in Johannesburg, what Peter missed most when he moved to Cape Town was the relatively easy access to the bush. For several years he'd been on the hunt for a game farm of his own, but restricting his search to within two hours' drive from Cape Town, he'd had no luck. One weekend he happened to travel further and found this spot, a 2 611ha former sheep farm. 'It ticked all my boxes. Here there's a river, there are birds, reeds... It feels like you are in the bush in the middle of the Karoo.'

Originally built around 1860, the home itself was a typical thatched Karoo farmstead that Peter politely describes as 'a little rustic'. It stood next to a derelict old school. By connecting the two buildings, Peter was able to turn a two-bedroom mishmash of spaces into a four-bedroom, symmetrical home that is sensitive to the original style of the property. An old outbuilding became a separate cottage, adding a fifth bedroom to the mix. 'I like having lots of people stay,' says Peter. 'It's for me and my mates.' >





A rietdak and painted stone walls set the tone for the comfortable living room. ABOVE Horace rests in the living room. ABOVE RIGHT A Nguni cow-hide rug lies in front of a leather Chesterfield sofa in the master bedroom.



Guests can gather around the fire pit on the front stoep. BELOW Peter tends to Blokkies, one of his beloved horses.

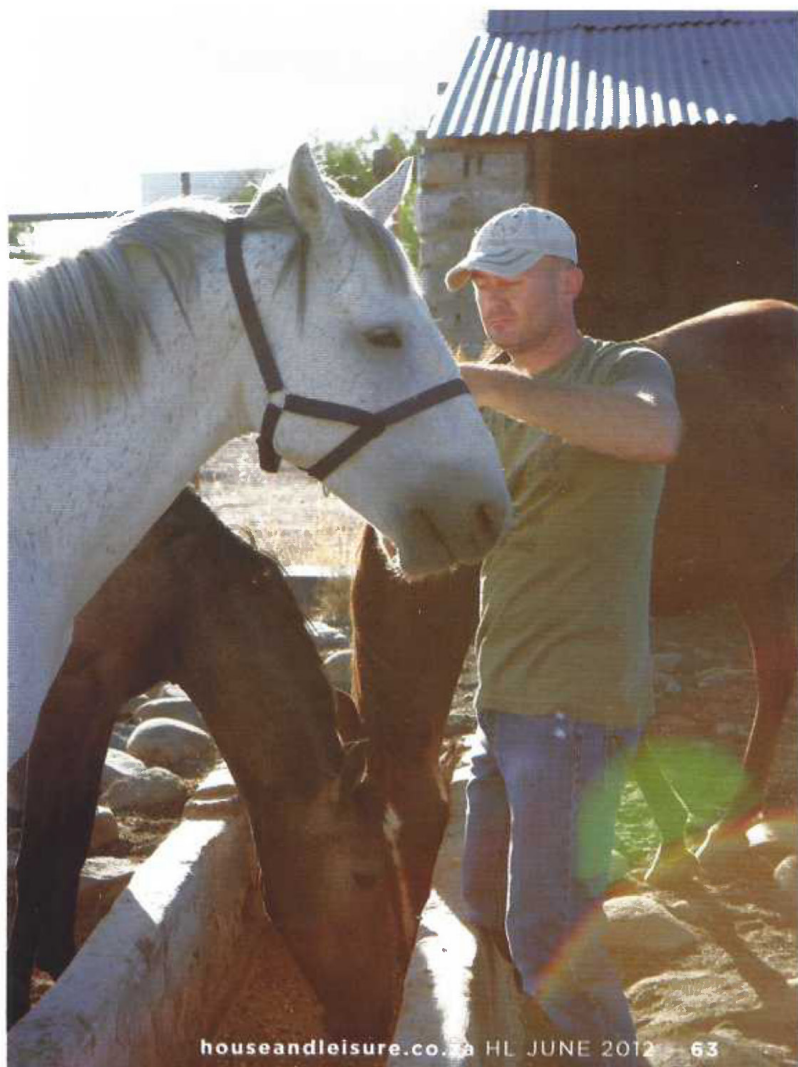


The weather dictates life here so, to ensure there's always a place to escape the scorching summer heat and wind, Peter had two wide stoeps built, one at the back and one at the front of the house. The front 'evening' veranda also has a fire pit, where, when the fire dies down at night, everyone sits back and stares up at the bright stars. (There's good reason why the largest telescope in the southern hemisphere, The Southern African Large Telescope was positioned nearby.)

With his energy focused on returning a former sheep farm to nature – he's reintroduced springbok, gemsbok, red hartebeest and blesbok – Peter admits to not being entirely happy with the home's interiors until a fire gutted the living room three years ago and forced him to take a closer look. The whole house had to be repainted, so he decided to update the bathrooms at the same time. With all the furniture removed, he was able to consider the contents of each room properly.

Peter used 'leftover' pieces of furniture that he had gathered over the years. Key pieces, such as the dresser in the kitchen, came with the farm; it was simply too big for the previous owners to move. 'It has about 100 layers of paint on it and is battered and bashed, but I love it,' he says. Over time he was able to draw together a cohesive look that he describes as 'eclectic and a bit colonial'.

While summer is all about horse riding and swimming, winter is Peter's favourite time to visit the farm. 'It's green and, because of the rain, the river flows. The cold is the best thing – I light a fire in every fireplace (there are three in the main house). I love spending a long, rainy weekend here, with some red wine and my gumboots on.' **Peter van Wyk, 083-658-8288**





PETER'S HOME TRUTHS

For me, winter entertaining is relaxed, with a meal such as oxtail or a lamb pot roast and a good red wine. **A few of my favourite things include** my 1971 Land Rover; a wall of photos of family and friends; my revolving antique bookcase; my horses and dogs. **My best place to enjoy a coffee** is in bed in the morning. **I relax** by running, enjoying a hot bath, going away on weekends with friends, or reading a good book. **If I could live anywhere else, it would be** the Okavango Delta in Botswana. **My pet design hate** is too much bling. **If I were to collect anything it would be** old cars. **When leaving for the Karoo, I always take** my dogs and my rifle. **The best-kept secret about the Karoo** is the Tankwa River Lodge I am planning to open soon on my farm (tankwariverlodge.co.za). **I'm currently reading** *The Man with the Black Dog* by Mario Cesare. **Five words that describe me** are sociable, generous, spontaneous, fun, practical. **My hidden talent** is repairing paraffin lanterns. **The first thing I do when I get to Blaauwheuvell** is greet the horses while the dogs dive into the pool. I just take it all in before I go inside. **I'm inspired by** life, light and nature. **I think up my best ideas while** driving. **The most inspiring place I've been to recently** was a weekend I spent at Babylonstoren (in the Cape Winelands). I was hugely inspired by the gardens, architecture and interiors.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT 'I love the four-poster in my bedroom,' says Peter of the bed he was initially sceptical about, owing to its size; quiver trees stand guard in front of the outdoor shower; understated yet luxurious, the bathrooms were designed to suit the style of the rest of the home.

Horace snoozes in front of the fire in one of the bedrooms inside the house. Heavy curtains and thick, wintry bedding are the perfect foil to the rustic farmhouse door and screed floors.

