

Jeff Corwin

tv host, wildlife biologist

After watching him travel the world on Animal Planet and on Food Network's new series, *Extreme Cuisine with Jeff Corwin*, some might expect the adventurer to return home to a world of modern conveniences. Not so. Corwin, his wife, Natasha, and their daughters, Maya and Marina, live on a 22-acre island off the Massachusetts shore. While the electricity is not always reliable, they can always depend on their home for sustainability and locally grown foods.

INTERVIEW BY BEKAH WRIGHT



Whether it's sampling wasps or homegrown apples, Corwin is game for any food adventure.

Has living on an island changed your approach toward food?

My wife and I have made it our mission for our daughters to see where food comes from and to connect with resources they depend upon. We grow our own berries, apples, vegetables, and herbs. We have our own clam and mussel beds and lobster traps, and we eat fish we've caught ourselves. We're probably getting 20 percent of our food from our property. That's exciting.

What would people be surprised to find in your kitchen?

A 15th-century pre-Columbian mortar and pestle I found in an antiques shop in Peru. It's in perfect working condition, but you can see areas that have been worn down and know how

many generations, families, and hands have held it and how many meals have been prepared in it. It's a piece of art and an artifact, but it has application to 21st-century life and will outlive any food processor and juicer.

What three things are always in your refrigerator?

I really like anchovies and anchovy paste is great. We always have *sriracha* sauce; I could eat that with a spoon. We always have locally made New England maple syrup. You can use all those things in many, many different dishes.

Where was your most memorable meal?

Natasha and I were visiting friends who have an apartment in Paris overlooking the Jardin

du Luxembourg. We decided to have an impromptu dinner party, so we hit this market on the Left Bank called Marché Mouffetard, where people bring in local wines, cheeses, and meats. We came back with the ingredients for the most wonderful meal of white asparagus soup and rabbit seasoned with sage, rosemary, and pancetta. We served that with fresh morels sautéed in a little bit of olive oil. My friend opened up this great 1947 Pétrus. I thought, *Hopefully, you'll have 85 years of great meals in your lifetime, but you'll probably never have another meal like this.*

What's the most unusual thing you've eaten?

In Thailand, we ate thumb-size wasps that are considered a delicacy. If one of them

stings you, it can kill you. The Thai make a silk-like thread of palm sugar and rice that's small enough for the wasp to carry. They follow the thread through the jungle to the wasp nest, where they excavate the wasp larvae, then sauté them with ingredients like chiles and lime juice. The insects were quite edible and solidly palatable.

Where's your favorite restaurant?

Barker Tavern, a classic New England-style tavern in Scituate, Massachusetts. We have a history there—it's where our wedding reception was held. We love to sit down at the bar and have Island Creek oysters that are from nearby Duxbury. You could go far for a great meal, but you can also go near for a great meal. ■

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