

# TRULLI, MADLY, DEEPLY

After years of leading small tour groups, two Canterbury chefs fell in love with, and bought, a picturesque stone trullo in southern Italy

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**THESE PAGES** Restoration of Lyn Baynes and Chris Broome's beautiful trullo, on high ground halfway between the Adriatic and Ionian seas, took three years, including careful stone-by-stone piecing together of its four cones and reconstruction of the thick outer walls.



**THIS PAGE** (clockwise from top left) The kitchen benchtop is crafted from solid travertine; the antique dining table and chairs were made in Piedmont. Limoncello in the making. On the bench are broad beans and local chicory fresh from the garden; the jars contain preserves such as bottled tomato passata and caramelised figs in grappa. Lyn and Chris say the local people have embraced them as if they were family. **OPPOSITE** Hanging from a timber beam in the dining room are chillies, herbs, onions and an old cow bell; the wall light fitting at right is from the former Greek enclave of Grottaglie, which is famed for its ceramics.

**A**RUSTIC STONE DWELLING on a high rocky plateau in southern Italy could not be more different from the 1860s totara homestead near Akaroa that is the New Zealand home of Lyn Baynes and Chris Broome.

The two chefs purchased their Canterbury country house – The Gables – in 1998, developing it as luxury guest accommodation steeped in local history. At the time they were still running their successful Christchurch restaurant Six Chairs Missing, but sold the business 18 months later to focus on The Gables. They thought they had found their one and only dream home but, as it turned out, a second one was waiting for them on the other side of the world.

After they set up The Gables, guests began to hear about Lyn’s passion for Italy and its food. She had worked and travelled in Italy and spoke Italian and people began asking when she and Chris would organise a tour there. So, in 2001 they led their first two tours to Tuscany. >



**THIS PAGE** (clockwise from top left) The old platter above the Tuscan sideboard in the dining room was traditionally used for sharing family meals or for sun-drying tomato paste. The impressive stone fireplace in the main living area is great for grilling food over embers in winter. Chris and Lyn found both the wall-mounted display cabinet and attractive small folding table in nearby Martina Franca. Plain and pretty with its simple white cushions, the seemingly made-to-size raffia and wood bench seat in the dining room is from Tuscany. **OPPOSITE** This dainty seat, traditionally hand-painted in Martina Franca, was a find from a little antique shop in Alberobello.



Over the next decade, leading tours in various other regions, they discovered Puglia (pronounced poo-lia), in the heel of Italy's boot. Puglia is known as the home of trulli (the plural form of trullo). Roofed with limestone cones, trulli were originally constructed as drystone workers' dwellings. The oldest surviving ones date back to the 16th century and are now a revered part of the region's unique architectural heritage.

Lyn and Chris say it took a while for Puglia to grow on them. "Places like Tuscany are so manicured, whereas Puglia is a bit gnarly," says Lyn. But, adds Chris, they have learned to love Puglia's culture of self-sufficiency. Local people still make their own olive oil and wine, grow all their own fruit, vegetables and legumes, and gather asparagus, chicory, mushrooms and garlic that grow wild in the fertile soil.

When first getting to know Puglia in 2008, the couple met Pietro and Beatrice Spalluto. Beatrice is steeped in the cuisine of Puglia and soon took Lyn and Chris under her wing. A friendship sprang up and Lyn and Chris began renting trulli from the family for their Puglia tours ([gables.co.nz/puglia](http://gables.co.nz/puglia)). >





**THIS PAGE** (from top) The beautiful old dresser (at right) in the main living area comes from Martina Franca. The woven wall hanging of goats from Sardinia almost ended up as a mat until Chris and Lyn decided it was a perfect fit for the alcove above their bed. An original niche in the living room makes a simple and practical shelf for books. **OPPOSITE** A Sardinian bedspread and matching rug complement the limestone architecture; niches on either side of the bed, built into the stone arch, act as bedside tables.



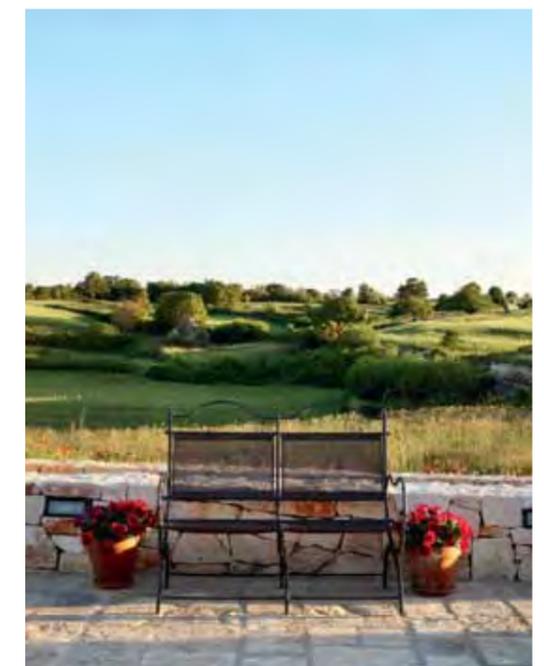
Before too long they were dreaming of a trullo of their own and in 2011 Pietro announced he had heard about a piece of land with a trullo that might suit them. Lyn went to see it with Pietro one evening when she and Chris had a tour group with them.

“What I saw was a charming, little old half-fallen-down trullo in a field of ripe barley with fig trees and drystone walls. Chris rang to say, ‘Have you bought it yet?’ I said, ‘No, but I’m going to.’ I’d fallen in love.”

The owners had lots of questions for Lyn; they wanted to know who she was and where she was from. “At the end there was a handshake and that was the purchase agreement.”

Local architect Stefania Albanese and her father Domenico, a master trullo builder, worked with them as the restoration plans came together. >





The original exterior drystone walls were up to 2m thick. Domenico, Pietro and their workers demolished and rebuilt these walls to take up less room – adding more interior space in the process – and insulation and cement were added. The trullo’s main central cone was reclad and three more were rebuilt and finished with flat limestone layers or chiancarelle.

Open-plan inside, the trullo is little more than a main living area, dining room, kitchen and bedroom with adjoining bathroom. The kitchen has a quaint barrel ceiling topped with a cummersa-style (gabled) roof.

To stay in keeping with its rustic feel, Chris and Lyn had solid travertine marble sinks and benches installed.

Many trulli are plastered inside, but Chris and Lyn chose to keep the stone exposed. “It looks so beautiful,” says Lyn, noting that they also have double-glazed windows with shutters in every room to let in light. “Some people put doors between rooms but we went with arches to keep everything open.”

An underfloor cistern, previously used for storing wine, has been converted into a rain-fed cistern used for irrigation. They buy drinking water and store it in another underground tank. >

**THESE PAGES** (clockwise from above) In years gone by, every town in Puglia had one big oven for baking bread and townsfolk were charged for using them, but people soon bucked the system by illegally using wood ovens hidden inside their homes – many still exist; Chris and Lyn built their wood oven outside beside the stone-paved terrace which is a picturesque spot for pasta-making. Trulli cones are traditionally topped with pinnacles representing the trademark of the stonemason, or trullisto, who built the dwelling – now people can choose the design they like. The view from this terrace is dotted with olive and fig trees and old stone trulli awaiting restoration.



**THESE PAGES** (from top) Alfresco afternoon tea at its best in the shade of an old fig tree. A fig tree stands amid self-seeding wildflowers; apart from olive trees, the old fig, walnut, cherry and almond trees and the vegetable garden, the land is covered with wildflowers and edible plants such as chicory, wild asparagus and prickly pears.

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Interior furnishings include many local treasures found in the nearby towns of Martina Franca, Locorotondo, Noci and Alberobello (a Unesco World Heritage site famed for its trulli).

Drought-resistant tomatoes have been planted, along with dozens of olive trees, including century-old local varieties.

Their large outdoor terrace, colourful with geraniums and lemons, has been finished with an outdoor wood oven in keeping with local custom.

Now that everything is complete, Chris and Lyn are looking forward to spending more time at their unique trullo. "How lucky we are!" exclaims Chris. "We now have a home in the two places in the world we love the most." ■

## Q&A

**A touch of home in Puglia is:** Mum's hand egg beater and we're also going to hang a photo of The Gables on the wall. *(Lyn)* Someone gave us a tacky souvenir teaspoon with a sheep on it and that goes on all our tours. *(Chris)*

**Most stressful moment during this project:** When we were at the notary's office to settle the purchase. The woman selling it to us was there, along with her husband and her 90-year-old mother, who originally owned it. She had to sign the papers too but, as she got the pen into her hand, she hesitated. We thought she was having second thoughts, but it turned out she'd just forgotten how to sign her name. *(Lyn)*

**Favourite place in the garden:** Under our umbrella-shaped fig tree, having a picnic. *(Lyn)*

**Best thing about our neighbours:** We are amazed by their friendliness, generosity and supportiveness. *(Chris)*

**We have had the most success growing:** Tomatoes and broad beans. *(Lyn)*

*Lyn Baynes and Chris Broome*