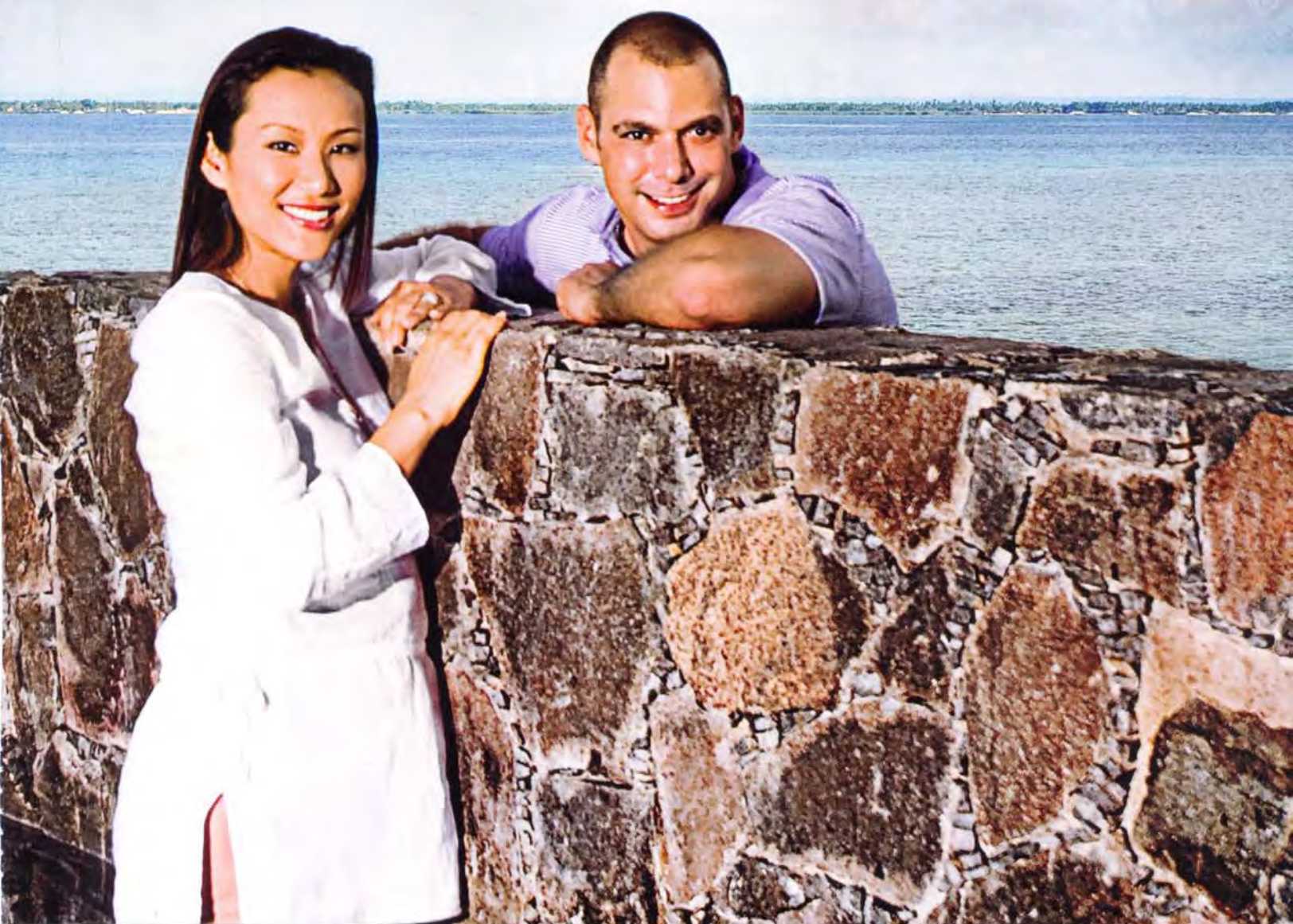


A Cebuana aunt (married to Jason's mother's brother) welcomed Jason and Anna to Mactan Island as tourists seven years ago from their fast-paced Hong Kong lives. The "white boy from Minneapolis" made quite the living as a chef for a multi-starred property and Anna was in fashion marketing, but with both surprised that "nothing was left at the end of the month." The couple was immediately smitten with the de-stress quality of life in Cebu and, when the opportunity arose, began what would be the most talked-about restaurant in family-owned property in Mactan. A year after their phenomenally successful debut, the hands-on couple have expanded to include a nine-room boutique hotel that is both laid-back and on the cutting edge. It is an unconventional marriage that Jason and Anna know, from experience...works.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT CEBU?

My life here is a hundred times better than in Hong Kong. And the people here are cool! (Jason, in flipflops, khaki shorts, and a rumpled shirt, his everyday uniform)

Photography: Genesis Raña
Digital Art: Shaola Apple O. Sanchez
Photo Editing: Francis Miñoza
Lighting Technician: Mar-gee Mar Solomon
Hair and makeup: Ramil Solis
Location: abaca, Mactan Island
Jason and Anna are joined by son Kento and daughter Reona (and a bun in the oven, as Anna is 5 months along in this photograph)





ABACA Punta Engaño, Lapulapu

It's been said: The true test of a fine resto is when the meticulous unthinkingly drive far and long just to dine in style. And this has been the case since Abaca, an upscale tropical boutique resort owned by international chef Jason Hyatt and wife Anna, soft-opened in 2006.

Classy diners with disposable bank accounts, which consist of a good mix of the city's upper-crust, expats and spill-over tourists from nearby hotels like Shangri-La's Mactan Resort and Spa and Hilton Hotel, are spotted sampling a delightful whole-roasted Pacific sea bass or a serving of cold smoked hand-sliced Norwegian salmon while savoring a blissful view of moonlight by Punta Engaño's sea.

For guests who need to get away from the everyday chaos, the resto's exclusivity, being privately tucked away off city limits, is always a welcome respite.

"We don't want to impose anything fancy on our guest. In fact, we want them to come in their Havaianas and feel as comfortable as possible," says restaurateur and chef Hyatt whose vast experience of running a kitchen and a restaurant has crossed geographical

borders - from his hometown in Los Angeles, New York, France, Hong Kong and presently, Cebu.

He constantly stresses that Abaca is stripped of frills, just the right elements to keep the place interesting. For instance, this upscale resto comes with its own wood-brick oven where hand-made pizzas are baked fresh and an in-house cellar that stores a variety of world wines.

And this advocacy for simplicity extends to every single dish whisked out of the kitchen. "There's no brain surgery behind cooking. Good food is simple food cooked right," he says. Thus, don't expect to see architectural food on a plate, just kitchen creations that leave an impression.

But never leave Abaca without sampling their rib-eye steak which, some guests swear, melts in the mouth. "Our beef is flown in weekly from the States," Jason says, unabashed in his claim that Abaca has the best angus beef in town.

And as promised, a serving of steak at Abaca is simple, and any other relish is considered a blasphemy.