

Chef Mark Salter

children—Charlotte, 17; Jamez, 16; and Patrick, 12—also help out. “At night, when he’s done in the kitchen, Mark comes out and talks to every guest,” Eve says. “He really wants people to feel at home here.”

Salter studied advanced professional cookery at the Colchester Institute in England and worked under top-flight chefs at hotels and restaurants in Switzer-

land, Germany, France, Scotland, and Wales. From his low-key demeanor, you’d never know that he has cooked for royalty and heads of state, including the late King Hussein of Jordan and Margaret Thatcher. He recalls having to go outside to take Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s order at the Inn at Perry Cabin and finding him surrounded by bodyguards toting machine guns.

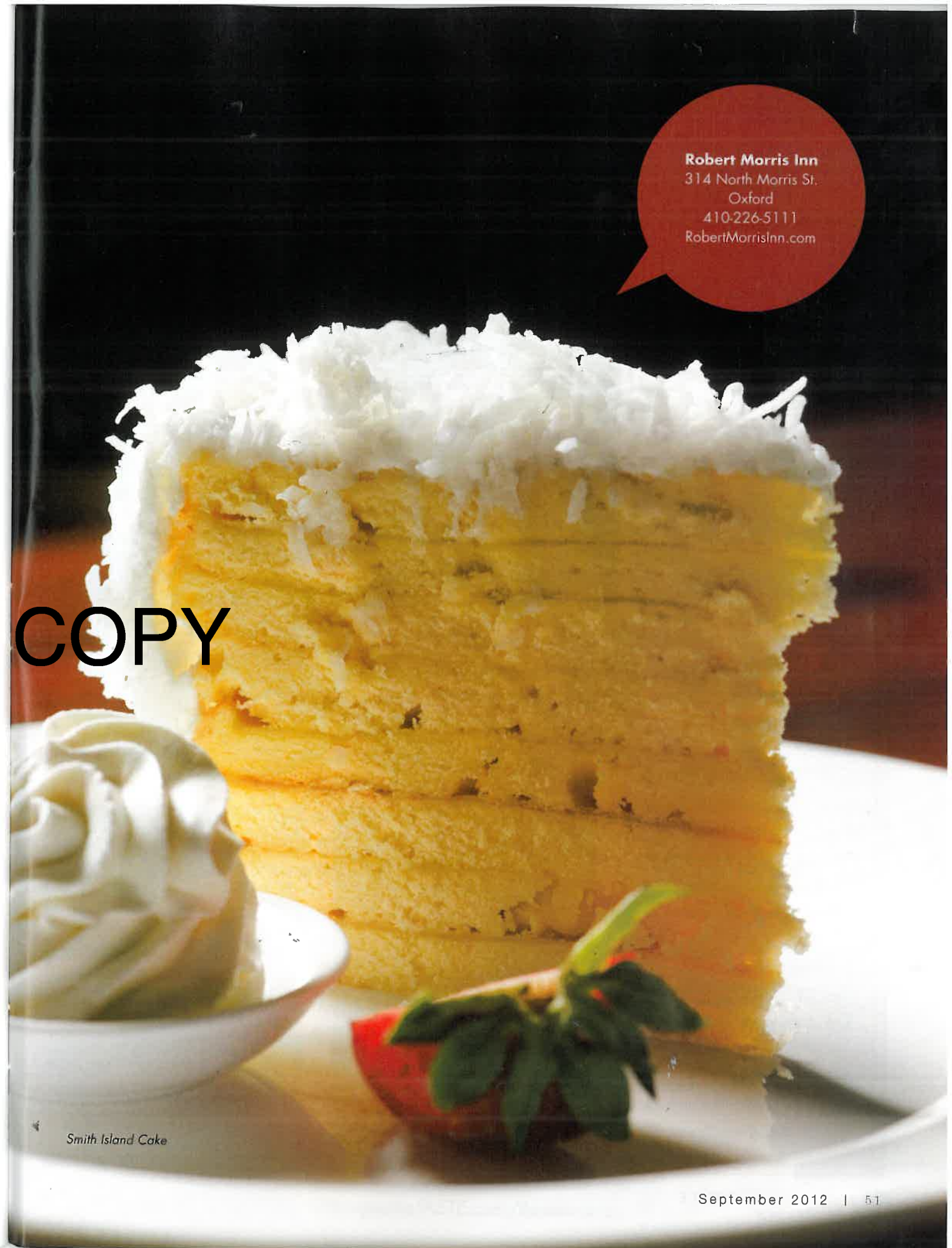
Eve is drying glasses behind the bar when Salter brings me his corn-crusted rockfish to taste, and she helps me dissect the components—underneath the dense, flaky fish is succotash made of parsnips, carrots, thyme, and apple-smoked bacon, surrounded by a butternut squash and carrot puree and dabs of balsamic glaze. (I’m here to try the food and write about the place, not to gain five pounds, but everything is so good, it’s hard to stop eating.) Eve urges me to try a few desserts, including the chocolate carrot cake—a recipe from Salter’s wife, Ailsa, who used to be a pastry chef—and the raspberry bread pudding with a dollop of white chocolate cream, a creation of Eve’s husband.

The inn appeals to people with a taste for character and history, Salter says. He appreciates that it’s small enough for him and the staff to take a lot of care with the food and provide personal service. And he enjoys the flexibility of offering an afternoon cooking demonstration; a vineyard-sponsored wine pairing dinner; or a holiday party, wedding, or British tea. The inn’s Robert Burns night, celebrating all things Scottish, sells out well in advance of its mid-January date. “September is a great month here because crabs are at their fullest and heaviest and oysters are just coming into season,” Salter says. “I’m very big on the seasons; I think about what’s available and work with it. You’ll never find venison on the menu in the summer, for example, and we take oysters on the half shell off from the end of February to September.”

Soon, he says, he’ll be thinking about comfort foods. But, with the days still warm, he’s not ready yet. ①

—Vicki Meade

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