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**Supervised Project Report
(ANTA604)**

Importance of Festivals to Antarctic Culture

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Abstract/executive summary (ca. 200 words):

Antarctica is the most remote and desolate continent on earth and those who find themselves there are among the most isolated. Communication with the outside world is more limited than nearly anywhere else and even communication between different bases on Antarctica is sometimes minimal. The importance of Antarctic culture and traditions on morale have been crucially important since the earliest expeditions but this culture is constantly evolving with time as people attempt to make working in this place more enjoyable. Festivals and events have grown in frequency and popularity and provide a greater sense of community and belonging. They act to lift the spirits of everyone involved and make this extremely harsh environment much more hospitable and home-like. Events such as the Midwinter Festival, Icestock, and the 48-hour film festival all successfully bring people out of the isolation of working in Antarctica and are fundamentally necessary to pushing the research communities goals forward on this continent.

Introduction

It's New Year's Eve and you are at an outdoor music concert with your closest work friends. The weather has been a bit chilly so you have on a jacket to keep warm but that doesn't stop you from having fun. Many different bands have been playing throughout the day and the turnout of several hundred people has been very good. Before listening to the final act you decide to get some coffee at Sawbucks- not exactly Starbucks but given the circumstances it will have to do. After getting your coffee you return to the music and dance the final minutes of 2017 away. When midnight hits it's unlike celebrating anywhere else. The sun is still up. In this scenario where do you picture yourself? Would you have ever thought this scenario is based on an actual event that occurs in Antarctica?

When imagining Antarctica one might picture images of a penguin waddling through the snow and ice or even giant glaciers in a frozen wilderness. You may even picture scientists participating in research but would an image of scientists and support staff rocking out to music at icestock ever cross your mind? The quirky culture of Antarctic residents is often overlooked with very few resources available to understand just what life is really like on the ice. This paper aims to shed light on one aspect of culture: the role of festivals in the human inhabitation of Antarctica and the benefits they have to the people residing there.

Many different festivals occur around the Antarctic bases throughout the year, even in the harsh winters. These festivals may seem odd and unsophisticated to the outside world but they are very important to the people temporarily living in Antarctica. The festivals can act as a way to make Antarctica feel more like home, connect the bases to one another, and give the individuals a break from the monotony of work in Antarctica. In this paper I will examine a few key festivals mainly in the Ross Sea region but also include trans-Antarctic and trans-national connections.

Antarctic Culture

Antarctica is the only landmass on Earth never inhabited by an indigenous people. There are no ancient Antarcticans with special traditions or even a unique native language home to this continent. In fact Antarctica was the last continent to be discovered in 1819-1820 and the first human inhabitants south of 60 degrees were British, US, and Norwegian whalers and sealers

(O'Reilly & Salazar, 2017). These early inhabitants never stayed permanently however and even today very few people could be considered residents of Antarctica. The only arguable settlements in Antarctica are the Chilean Villa Las Estrellas, where roughly 80 people live year round, and the Argentinean Esperanza base with 55 residents. Both could potentially be considered a place of permanent residence due to the presence of families and with resources such as schools, medical facilities, and gyms (O'Reilly & Salazar, 2017). However even with these facilities many residents do not stay for more than a few years thus disrupting the definition of true permanent inhabitation. The lack of true permanent residents that stay for decades has caused Antarctica to have no real human history. Due to the lack of a rich human history Antarctic anthropology for a long time has seemed to be an oxymoron (Schweitzer, 2017). However, even though Antarctica does not have a vast past shared with humans, aspects of human culture can still be found, such as in important festivities shared by the people residing there. Unfortunately little anthropological work has been done on Antarctic culture and many areas are lacking significantly. Recently however more anthropologists are tackling this lack in knowledge, including work from Salazar and O'Reilly. While the emergence of Antarctic anthropology has been highly beneficial in better understanding life in isolated and harsh environments there is still no work done on the role of festivals in Antarctica, despite their importance to dealing with life in the most inhospitable environment.

Culture can be defined and described in many different ways, from the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group to the set of shared attitudes, values, and goals that are shared by people in a place or time. Through these broad definitions it could be argued that the people of Antarctica have their own "culture" and this may change from station to station and even year to year. Based on the Antarctic Treaty, governance of the continent emphasizes science, peace, environmental protection, and international cooperation. The nations conducting research in Antarctica must respect the terms of the Antarctic Treaty, thus creating a basis for shared attitudes, values and goals between the individuals living and working there. These shared attitudes can be observed when viewing different Antarctic programs vision statements. For example, both the New Zealand and Australian Antarctic programs have goals to value, protect and understand Antarctica, creating a culture in which conservation and sustainability are highly important.

Antarctic values and culture can be seen as extremely diverse and forever evolving due to staff and policy changes year to year. The Antarctic “way of life” even varies throughout the year as bases become livelier in the summer months when station populations are at their highest. In the austral summer months approximately 5,000 scientists, logistics personal, military staff and civilians from 29 countries with voting status in the Antarctic Treaty System inhabit Antarctica (O'Reilly & Salazar, 2017). Figure 1 taken from the Handbook on the Politics of Antarctica, shows the vast diversity of the station populations in the austral summer (Dodds, Hemmings & Roberts, 2017). Based on the figure it is very evident just how extreme the diversity in nations present in Antarctica is, and this is only showing the 29 countries with consultative status. While not every station benefits from the presence of other bases nearby, many stations are rather close to one another creating a unique bond and shared identity between them. This is extremely evident in the relationship between New Zealand’s Scott Base and McMurdo operated by the United States. These bases are within walking distance to one another (if weather permits), allowing for a sharing of culture. One example of this is the annual Scott Base versus McMurdo rugby match in which the New Zealanders are able to share some of their homeland culture with the Americans. The blending of cultures and close proximity can lead to a shared set of values between the programs. This was evident in the joint proposal between these two programs to create the Ross Sea marine protected area.



Figure 1: Antarctic summer populations by country, figure taken from the Handbook on the Politics of Antarctica

Culture in Antarctica is gradually becoming a subject worthy of study, with many more anthropologists and psychologists becoming interested in the way humans handle living in this

extreme environment. Current anthropological work conducted in Antarctica has dealt mainly with scientific culture and the ways human activities impact areas of the continent. However focusing on scientific culture and scientific activities creates huge gaps in knowledge on Antarctic base life, as many residents are not scientists but rather support staff. Focusing on base life as a whole is vital in understanding the true Antarctic culture. A very important component to life on the bases is the celebration of events and the participation in festivals that bring the community together. Due to the importance of base staff interaction, festivals will be the main focus of study, as they have the ability to create lasting bonds between members of the community on a base and continental level.

Function of Festivals

Throughout history festivals have played a very important role in bringing communities together. Festivals can be defined as ‘specific rituals, presentations, performances or celebrations that are consciously planned and created to mark a special occasion or to achieve particular social, cultural, or corporate goals and objectives’ (Hall, Basarin & Lockstone- Binney, 2010). They can manifest themselves in many different forms, from the celebration of a holiday to individuals gathering to listen to live music.

Community festivals commonly enhance both group and place identity (De Bres & Davis, 2010). Group identity refers to an individual's sense of belonging to a particular group and place identity can be described as a “potpourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas, and related feelings about specific physical settings, as well as types of settings (Proshansky, 1978). Having an enhanced sense of group and place identity can be very beneficial to an individual, especially when living in an isolated community. This is important in a setting such as Antarctic bases because it allows the residents to have a greater connection to their temporary community. Festivals also act as an expression of local identity and reflect the internal life of the community (Derrett, 2008). This is easily seen in the festivals and events that take place in Antarctica both at a base and continental level. Many bases have their own traditions and events allowing them to generate their own unique culture and local identity; interestingly this can change from year to year as new personnel are brought in. An expression of “local” identity can also be argued at the continental level as well. Many bases partake in the same festivals, such as the midwinter festival, and all bases are under the same selection pressures of dealing with the

harsh outdoor environment and isolation from home. These unique factors can lead to a shared sense of place identity between all individuals residing in Antarctica. This is very important since a sense of community has been shown to be a critical part of a healthy community (Derrett, 2003). Events that connect the bases with each other, further aid in establishing this sense of community not only between individuals at the same base but also between all bases participating. Festivals involving many of the Antarctic bases can create a better and healthier living environment for all involved.

Festivals can also lead to healthier environments for individuals living in isolated communities since they have the ability to bring people together and become a means to cope during difficult times (Derrett, 2008). Living in Antarctica can be extremely challenging as it is the highest, coldest, driest, and windiest of the world's continents. While the outdoor environment is extremely harsh, it however is the social environment rather than the physical that leads to the most stress in the Polar Regions (Lantis, 1968). Socially Antarctica can be a very difficult place to live due to prolonged isolation which can generate both internal and external stressors. These external pressures include the inability to contact friends and family and a constant fear of unpleasant events occurring back home. There is a huge sense of helplessness involved in being thousands of miles away from home in an isolated community, leading to large amounts of stress brought on by these external factors. Internal stressors can be caused by a lack of privacy, boredom caused by a lack of environmental stimulation, and reductions in feelings of personal significance (Natani & Shurley, 1974). Festivals and events however have the ability to help individuals cope with these difficult stressors. Bringing people together in a fun setting can help distract them from the constant stress and monotony of life in Antarctica. Festivals also allow individuals to showcase their talents whether it be through dance, song, decoration, or even cooking. Showcasing one's talents can have a huge impact on feelings of personal significance. By participating it can give the individual a greater sense of achievement and self-worth in the community.

Community involvement through festivals has many positive impacts not only for the community but for the individual as well. Chue argues that festivals provide social incentives for individuals living in the area to get actively involved in community activities (Chue, 1998). Given that festivals are likely to serve as a way to build social cohesion and trust throughout by reinforcing ties within a community (Gursoy, Kim & Uysal, 2004). Participation in festivals

could bring together individuals who may not normally associate with one another. Mixing of this kind can have highly positive impacts on the health of the overall base by allowing everyone to have a better sense of understanding of one another. Interestingly some individuals residing on Antarctic bases have said they are actually more social when in Antarctica than back home. Festivals further allow for sociality between all members of a base and sometimes even between multiple bases, such as the annual rugby game between McMurdo and Scott Base. By bringing individuals together festivals are able to provide a “now” and offer opportunities to speculate on the future (Derrett, 2003). Festivals also provide something to plan and look forward to. The festivals that occur in Antarctica are all volunteer based and preparation can sometimes take weeks. Because of the extensive preparation the actual event day is not of the only importance, but hard work and team effort that goes on in creating the day is also significant.

Midwinter Festival

The Midwinter festival is arguably the most important social event that occurs in Antarctica with historical ties to the early explorers. The celebration of Midwinter's Day is a holiday that is unique to Antarctica and is usually celebrated on or around June 22 which marks the halfway point of the period of continuous darkness (Noyce, 2012). What makes this holiday especially unique is the fact that it comes at a time of extreme isolation between the staff wintering over at the bases and the outside world. During the winter months there are no visitors as both ships and flights halt during these harsh months. The midwinter festival acts as a way to lift moral around the stations and give people hope that in a few short months the sun will once again return.

Captain Robert F. Scott and the men of the *discovery* expedition (1901-1904) were the first individuals in Antarctica to initiate an elaborate midwinter celebration (Noyce, 2012). Midwinter dinners were created out of the critical need to uplift the mood of the group, mend relationships strained by the harsh winter, and encourage a sense of solidarity (Noyce, 2012). These feasts were a crucial part of surviving the psychological strain of life in complete isolation and darkness. Captain Robert F. Scott easily summed up just how important this feast was in his journal entry during the expedition in 1902:

At six we had our dinner in the wardroom, with the table decorated and the display of all our plate. Starting with turtle soup, we passed on to a generous helping of mutton, and from that to plum pudding, mince pies, and jellies, all washed down with an excellent dry champagne. With a largely assorted dessert of crystallized fruits, almonds and raisins and nuts came the Port and liqueurs, which brought us into good form. ... With such a dinner we agreed that life In the Antarctic Regions was worth living.
(Scott 1905 II: 254).

The Midwinter feast and festival became a staple of many more Antarctic expeditions to come. One of the more interesting Midwinter celebrations occurred during the *Terra Nova* expedition in which Raymond Priestley and five other men were forced to winter over in an ice cave on Inexpressible Island due to sea ice preventing them from being picked up by ship (Noyce, 2012). During these difficult six months the men had to ration the little food they had but that did not stop them from participate in a Midwinter's feast. Their Midwinters "feast" consisted of biscuits, chocolate, sugar, cigars, and song, nothing compared to the extravagant meals of previous years (McCorristine & Mocellin, 2016). Even though this meal was extremely simple compared to other years it still was very valuable to the wellbeing of the men stuck in the ice cave. In his journal Priestley wrote, "The glow it left behind lasted...for a week or more" (Priestly 1915:310).

Today the Midwinter feast and celebration are a vital part of Antarctica culture and continue to uplift the spirits of the people trapped at the bases even though they now have the ability to contact the outside world. Midwinter's day is thought to be the most international of holidays and is celebrated by individuals coming from an array of nationalities (Noyce, 2012). Ethnographic research on the SANAE base from 1970-1993 suggests that the Midwinter celebration was an annual highlight and people really looked forward to the black tie event that helped boost moral (Van Der Merue, 1998). Even today this celebration is an integral part of station life in Antarctica, with extensive preparation occurring to make the event special. The mess halls are usually decorated with flags of the Antarctic Treaty Nations and homegrown entertainment such as poetry reading, music, and a traditional play usually occur (Noyce, 2012).

The invention of technology and the use of emails at the bases has allowed for a new twist on the traditions of the midwinter celebration. Bases now send out invitations to other

stations telling them to drop by and partake in the festivities. They even sometimes include the menu to entice visitors, unless the bases are extremely close this is an unlikely scenario, but adds to the fun. Figure 2 shows an example of some of the past midwinter invitations from different bases. The invitations are a great way to further connect the bases and showcase the personality of each station. As shown from Figure 2 the invitations usually have a lightheartedness about them and add to the eccentricity of Antarctic culture.

Due to the invention of technology the midwinter festival not only connects the bases with one other but it also connects the bases with the world outside of Antarctica as well. This is seen at the US stations, in which the president usually sends a greeting to members of the US bases on Midwinter's day; in 2012, this was a letter from Barack Obama (see appendix). The British Antarctic Survey stations also get a "shout out" from the outside world during the annual BBC Midwinter Broadcast. During the broadcast the radio station plays songs requested by individuals wintering over at the bases and even includes personal recorded messages from the winter over teams loved ones. When the first Midwinter festival occurred the men probably never could have imagined how far it could progress, but nevertheless Midwinter's Day continues to be a major way of boosting morale and giving hope during the long lonely winters.

While much has changed since the first midwinter's day many things still remain the same. The feast is still the most important aspect of the event and menus are created to showcase the cuisine. The appendix shows the menu created for the Midwinter dinner from the *Aurora* expedition led by Mawson in 1911-1912. Based on the menu the meal was rather simple but considering the time and place it is quite the feast. Today the bases still make their own menus and partake in lavish meals where the tables are set. The 2011 menu in the appendix shows just how much the meals have changed, from hearty feasts to full on fine dining. In the exhilaration of the extravagant meals the early explorers but not forgotten and midway through the feast they are honored by a traditional toast (Noyce, 2012)

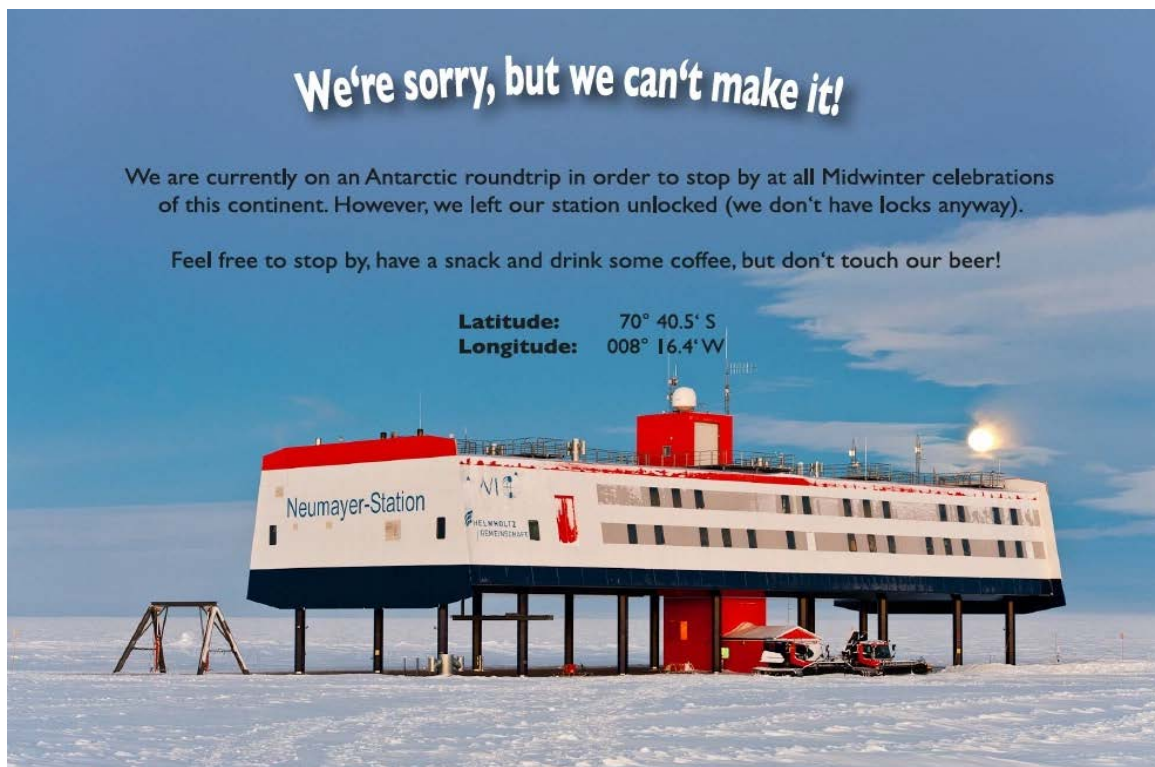


Figure 2: Examples of some of the many Midwinter invitations. The top image is from Australia's Casey Station sent out in 2016, and the bottom from the German Neumayer Station sent out in 2012.

Icestock

One of the more unique festivals to occur on the continent of Antarctica is the Icestock music festival that occurs at McMurdo base. This festival is exclusive to the Ross Island but still encompasses the quirky culture of Antarctic research bases. The event is usually held on New Year's Eve and contains talented musicians from McMurdo. There are no try outs to perform in the festival and many musicians play in multiple bands. The idea for icestock came about by Rick Campbell and two of his friends (David Sullivan and Dave Terry) in 1989 (Krzywonos, 2016). In an interview for the Antarctic Sun Rick Campbell said, "We were sitting at the Erebus Club, which is now Gallagher's, and Dave mentioned a music gathering in Iowa called 'Cornstock,' somewhat modeled after Woodstock," Campbell said. "[The first year] we had nine or eleven 'acts' with some folks playing in multiple gigs. It was a huge success" (Krzywonos, 2016). Even 26 years later the event is still going strong and merchandise related to icestock can even be purchased at the McMurdo shop. Figure 3 below shows just how big the event is and its ability to bring the community together.



Figure 3: The crowd at Icestock 2016.

Photo Credit: Stephanie Krzywonos

Icestock has been a large part of McMurdo culture for many years and continues to excite veterans and newbies alike. The festivals not only has live music but food also is an important aspect as well. A chili cook off occurs and a make shift coffee stand called Sawbucks serves hot drinks to the concert goers. In order to make the event a success many individuals volunteer countless hours of their time. Having the event run solely on volunteer effort shows just how important and valued it is to the residents of McMurdo. Volunteering to put on an event can help strengthen ties between residents and give the individuals participating a larger pride for their community. The uniqueness of the Icestock music festival is greatly summed up in Leslie Carol Roberts book *The Entire Earth and Sky: View on Antarctica* when she says,

Icestock apparently suffers in terms of musicality- dry air and cold warp instruments- but still each New Year's Day musicians gather and play whatever style of music appeals. It makes for a messy, impromptu feel and perhaps best reflects the experience of living in Antarctica, where mood and weather fluctuate at alarming rates.

(Roberts, 2008).

48 Hour Film Festival

The 48 hour film festival may be one of the most important events for base interconnectivity. Around the beginning of August each year bases from around the continent and surrounding sub Antarctic islands compete with each by submitting goofy 5 minute videos. Each team has 48 hours to write, shoot, and edit an original film that the other participating bases watch. The winner of the competition is chosen by popular vote. To spice things up and ensure the videos are actually made in the 48 hour time frame each 5 minute video must contain a series of elements that are released via email to the participants and chosen by 5 different bases. These random additives change from year to year and below are examples of past lists:

2010

- The sound of ice cracking
- A map of the station
- A computer mouse
- A queen
- The line "I'll save you"

2014

- The sound of a squealing pig
- A swing
- A Swim Suit
- Wal Footrot, an iconic Kiwi cartoon character and Google able
- The line "It'll be dark soon and they mostly come at night, mostly."

The 48 hour film festival started in 2006 when Anthony Powell, a communications engineer at McMurdo came up with the idea as a way to connect the bases. In an interview for The Antarctic Sun he said, ““I thought it would be an interesting way to get into contact with the other bases — something to give people to talk about and do together.” Over 10 years later the event is still going strong and in 2016 18 stations competed. The competition interconnects the bases by allowing viewers to see what life is like on other stations, and even lets them get a glimpse of what other bases look like. Many of the videos are even posted online, allowing viewers from around the world to see the unique culture of life in Antarctica. The competition also allows members of the same base to interact with one another in a creative way and frees them for 48 hours from the monotony of living in the most isolated place in the world. Dominic Taylor who winters over at Casey Station said, “It’s (the 48 hour film festival) a fantastic opportunity to take part in an event that can bring together all the different wintering communities, and help create a continent-wide culture that allows us to share an insight into each other’s world” (Rejeck, 2008).

Conclusion

Life in Antarctica can often be isolated, harsh and lonely. Festivals and events such as the Midwinter festival, Icestock, and the 48-hour film festival provide those living in this environment a means to connect with each other, form and strengthen their communities, and connect to the bases that surround them. They also provide everyone with an outlet from their work and something to look forward too when times get tough. These events are constantly evolving and new ones are being added but the fundamental purpose remains the same. With the help of these events and festivals, Antarctica will continue to have its own unique culture where research and innovation continue to be the fundamental purpose for being there but everyone involved can have a good time along the way.

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Appendix

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

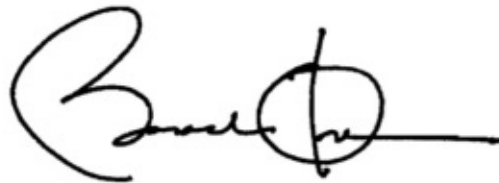
June 14, 2012

I send greetings to the international community wintering in Antarctica.

Guided by a passion for innovation and discovery, your research is changing the way we view our world. Carrying forward a rich legacy of scientific advances in Antarctica, your efforts provide vital insights into rising sea levels and increase our understanding of global climate change.

As you continue to brave harsh winter nights, know that your bold example will inspire future generations to expand the horizons of human knowledge. In keeping with the enduring Antarctic Treaty, your work will lead to broader cooperation among nations as we promote environmental stewardship and preserve our planet.

May your new findings and friendships continue to benefit us all. I extend my best wishes for a productive and satisfying year, and I thank you for a job well done.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Barack Obama", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned centrally below the text of the letter.

Menu du Diner

—o—

Escoffier Potage à la Reine

Noisettes de Phoque
Haricot Verts
Champignons en Sauce Antarctique

Claret
Tintara

Pingouin à la Terre Adélie
Petits Pois à la Menthe
Pommes Nouvelles

Burgundy
Chauvenet
1898

Asperges au Beurre fondu

Plum Pouding Union Jack
Pâté de Groseilles

Port
Köpke

Desserts

Café

—o—

During dinner the Blizzard will render the usual accompaniments - The Tempest, For Ever and Ever, etc.

MMS 382-1/a128142



AMUNDSEN - SCOTT SOUTH POLE STATION MID WINTER DINNER 2011

1911-2011 *CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF DISCOVERY*

◇ APPETIZERS ◇

≈ Shrimp Cocktail ≈ Assorted Cheese Tray ≈ Stilton Blue Cheese Walnut Tarragon Dip
≈ Roasted Red Pepper Goat Cheese Pine Nut Dip ≈ Beef Pâté Maison ≈ Herb Crusted Crostinis

◇ SALAD ◇

Fresh Greens tossed with mandarin orange sections, Marinated dry cherries,
tossed walnuts with a raspberry vinaigrette

◇ ENTREE ◇

GLAZED DUCK BREAST

Duck Breast glazed with an Amaretto Blackberry Balsamic reduction and
Topped with a Blackberry Tarragon garnish

•LOBSTER & KING CRAB ENCROUTE

Lobster and King Crab meat sautéed in garlic butter topped with a champagne sauce
Served in a Pastry Shell

•STUFFED KUMARA

Seasoned Kumara stuffed with pistachios, crasins and wild rice
Topped with gruyère white wine sauce

◇ STARCH ◇

Polenta Cakes - Polenta baked with Sundried Tomatoes, Capers and Rosemary

◇ VEGETABLES ◇

Broccoli, Cauliflower, Artichoke Hearts and Mushrooms
sautéed in olive oil and lightly seasoned

◇ DESSERT ◇

≈ Crème Brûlée ≈ Plum Pudding ≈ Sticky Toffee Pudding ≈ Napoleons, ≈ Chocolate Mousse
≈ Mixed Berry Pie ≈ Candied Almonds ≈ Assorted Cookies ≈ Tea Cookies ≈ Rustic English Bread



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