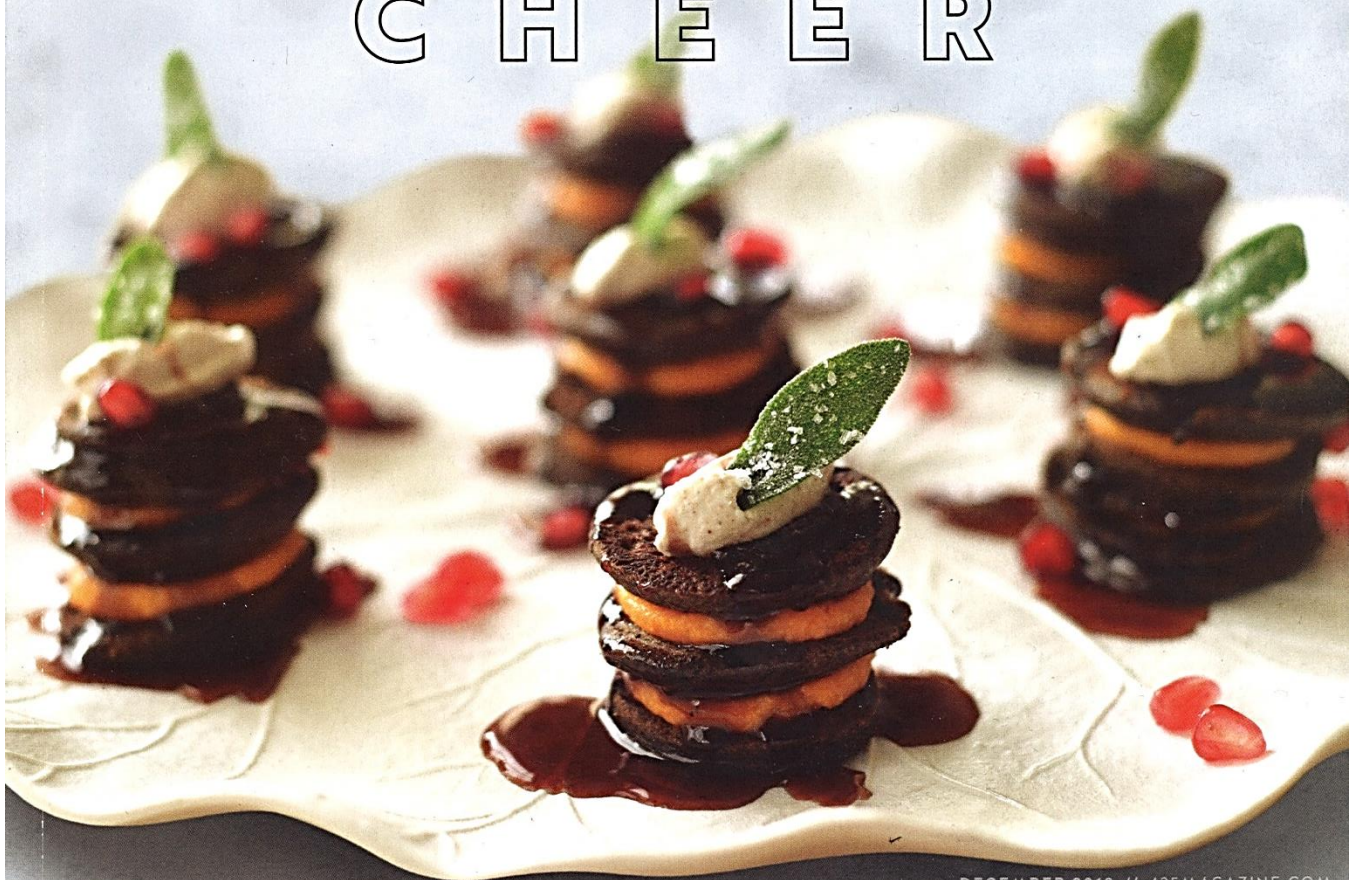


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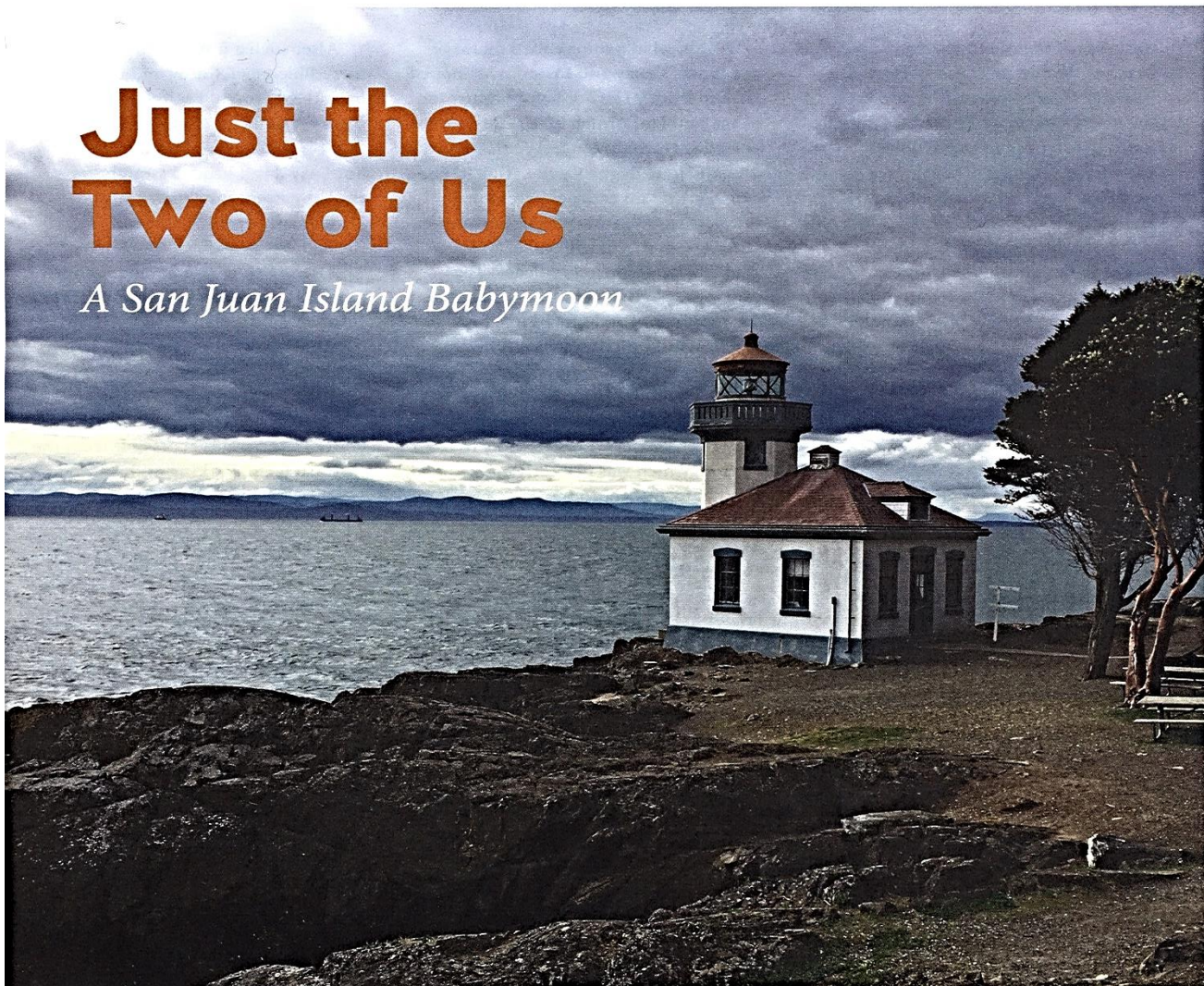
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BY EMILY MANKE

Just the Two of Us

A San Juan Island Babymoon



Watching the evening sky put on its colorful display as we dined on gourmet meals in Friday Harbor was not a scene my husband, Casey, and I imagined ourselves enjoying during my pregnancy. But alas, as luck and privilege would have it, we were able to do just that during our San Juan Island babymoon. And we enjoyed every single minute of it.

Our journey began on the last ferry out. We'd fashioned the back of Casey's canopied truck into a very comfortable bed, so we got cozy and

relaxed until the ferry came in.

We sailed into town late and "camped" in our truck on our friends' property the first night, and chatted in the morning about life and kids over homemade sourdough toast. After a leisurely visit, Casey and I went to Friday Harbor to get brunch, as toast didn't quite satiate my pregnant appetite. We stopped at the Rocky Bay Café, a local hotspot featured on the Food Network. It hit the spot in that magical way a classic diner breakfast does.

From there, we headed to the

west side of the island to enjoy some beaches. The weather was perfect. The island gets, on average, less rain than the mainland, so we figured we'd get as much beach time in as possible. First, we stopped at San Juan County Park, where we marveled at the tide pools, sea life, and view of Vancouver Island. There also was a gaggle of geese and goslings blocking the boat launch, and this soon-

“Parenthood is going to change everything, so taking one last trip as a kid-free couple was such a delight.”

to-be momma could not get enough of those little cuties.

Next, we visited the Lime Kiln State Park, the famous whale-watching beach. While we weren't lucky enough to spot any orcas, we did enjoy some hummingbirds, harbor seals, and some awe-inspiring scenery.

We had to cut the beach trip a bit short, however, because we had big plans for Friday Harbor.

We refreshed at our babymoon suite at the Friday Harbor House, which featured a stunning view of the harbor. Oh, and did I mention the babymoon suite comes complete with sweet and savory snacks from the on-site restaurant? It satiated every pregnancy craving imaginable.

I had just enough time to shower, snack, and change before my prenatal massage at Lavendera Massage. Beth Drake was my masseuse, and she was a miracle worker. She used a massage method called Structural Relief Therapy. SRT works by finding the tender points on your body and moving your corresponding joint until the tenderness dissolves. Drake found some hotspots on my body I didn't even realize were there, but, in hindsight, were causing me serious pain, especially in my ribs and hips. Having three kids of her own, and lots of knowledge and expertise about pregnant bodies, she knew just how to provide the gentle but effective touch needed.

Ahhh, what a difference a massage can make. Casey and I window-shopped around Friday Harbor before returning to the hotel for dinner at The Restaurant at Friday Harbor House. We started with a small plate, Bagna Càuda. This Italian dish features an array of vegetables: rainbow carrots, broccolini, cauliflower, parsnips, oyster mushrooms, and stunning watermelon radishes. The veggies are lightly cooked — except the radishes — and served in a bed of warm olive oil, black garlic, and anchovies, with bread for dipping. It was lightly salted, and so delicious.

Next came the main courses, the real showstoppers. I ordered the roasted halibut, which was perfectly cooked and placed atop an heirloom carrot puree and served with smoked oysters and purple confit potatoes, with whole asparagus draped over the tender fish. The plate was garnished and seasoned with leek ash, which perfectly complemented the smoky flavor from the oysters and halibut. For dessert, Casey and I shared a piece of moist, delectable chocolate cake with a scoop of vanilla ice cream, topped with a sweet cream sauce. OK; we didn't really share. I ate it all.

After such a mind-blowingly incredible meal, Casey and I headed back to our room. Feeling a bit sore from my massage (Drake warned that I would be), and tired from our busy day, I headed straight for the babymoon suite's jetted tub.

We both slept soundly, as the bed was heavenly.

After a hearty brunch the following morning, we headed to Kings Market to stock up on supplies for our glamping trip that night. We spent some time at Westcott Bay Shellfish Co. Casey sampled the raw Pacific oysters, and I just took in the scenery. English Camp, a lovely state park, is accessible from the shellfish farm. Parking at the farm just





to go to English Camp usually isn't allowed. There are signs advising against it. But since we were there in the off-season, and it wasn't too busy, they didn't mind us making the trek. After our walk, we bought some oysters to grill and were on our way to Lakedale Resort.

Lakedale is a vacation destination in and of itself. It boasts two swimmable lakes, and the amenities include a 10-room Pacific Northwest-style lodge, yurts, log cabins, canvas glamping cabins, and regular campsites galore. You can rent paddle boats, fish in the fully stocked lake, swim, or just relax and enjoy yourself. We chose the latter, as it wasn't warm enough for a swim. We built a fire next to our canvas

tent and grilled up some oysters (taking care to cook them fully), potatoes, and veggies. The little on-site store had all the little things for camping we forgot, and some extras — including Mad Libs, which Casey and I played until we fell asleep on our ultra-comfy glamping bed.

Unfortunately for us, real life was calling. We had to leave early the next morning to catch a ferry, and therefore missed the complimentary breakfast in the mess hall. We had one last ferry ride together before hopping on the road back to reality. As the boat pulled away from the dock, we reflected on the unbelievable fortune of being able to enjoy such a wonderful getaway.

Parenthood is going to change everything, so taking one last trip as a kid-free couple was such a delight. If you can take a babymoon, or if you know some expecting parents and want to treat them to one, do. And no matter the time of year, San Juan Island is a magical place to do it. Next time we visit, we will have a baby in tow. ■