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*The  
FOOD  
Issue*

# The Good Life

WHERE TO  
TRAVEL,  
EAT WELL  
& RELAX\*



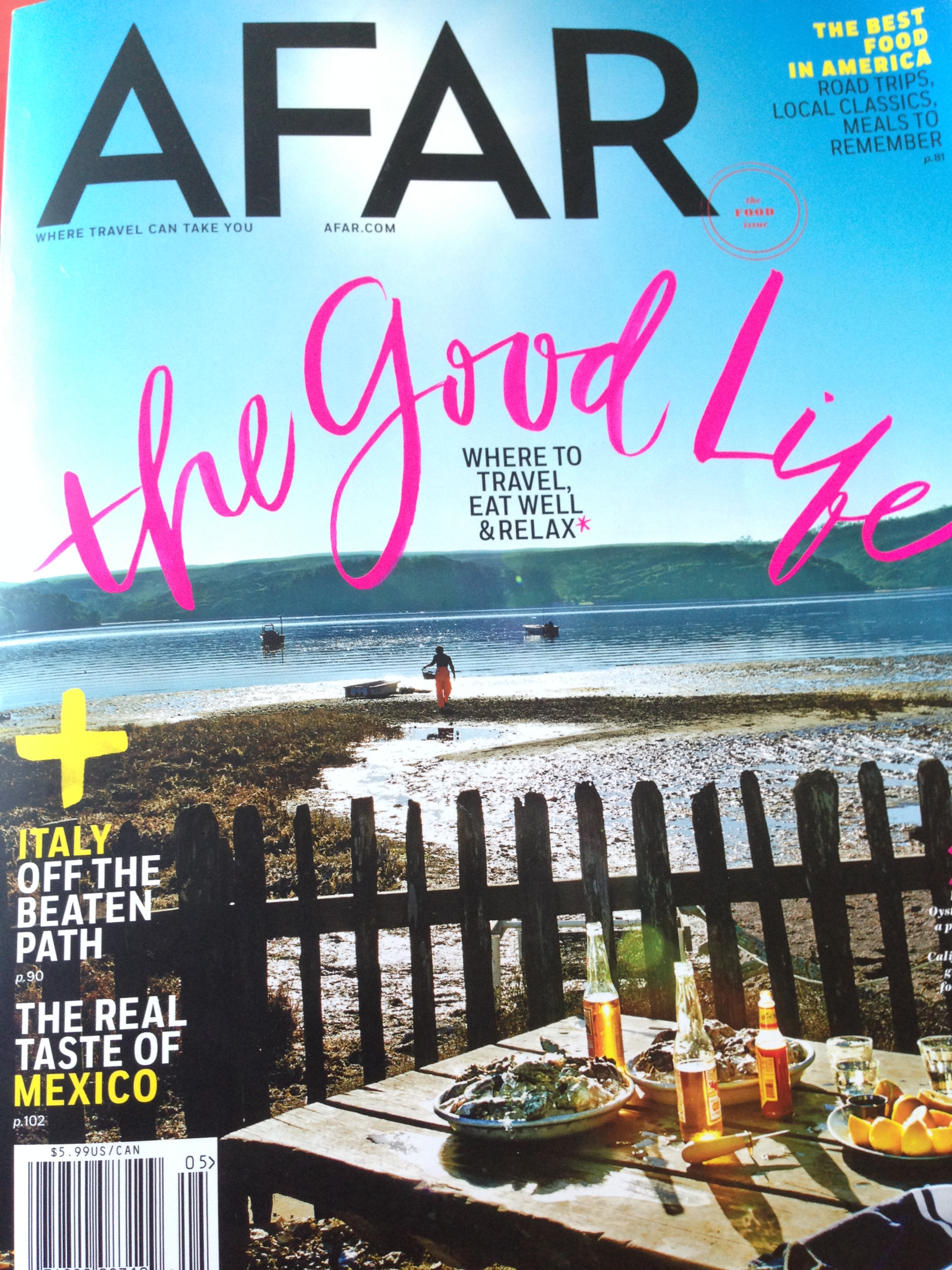
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## HOTEL

**A STAR CHEF'S NEW BEACH RETREAT**

"Everything should be simple at the beach," says Simon Baeyertz, co-owner of **El Blok**, a new hotel on the island of Vieques, just off the east coast of mainland Puerto Rico. A white concrete lattice-work exterior encircles 22 rooms, which feature brightly colored Spanish floor tiles. The restaurant serves as the hotel's social center, and San Juan star chef **José Enrique** serves refined takes on Puerto Rican cuisine, such as bacon-and-egg empanadas, and lamb and pork cooked on an oversize rotisserie. "I like to say we're a restaurant with rooms above," Baeyertz says.

—JEN MURPHY



See Jen's guide to the Namib Sand Sea at [afar.com/namibiaski](http://afar.com/namibiaski).

## JUST BACK FROM NAMIBIA

AFAR's deputy editor, **Jen Murphy**, found an unexpected way to experience the African country's natural wonders.

I never imagined that my first safari would take place on skis. Or that my first ski experience would take place on sand. But on a recent trip to Namibia, I found myself schussing down the dunes of the **Namib Sand Sea** desert. Our tour organizer, a German man named Werner, had the idea to explore these dunes, which extend 1,200 miles along the Atlantic coast, as he would the Bavarian Alps. On the first day, our group boarded 4x4s driven by three giant men named Harry, OJ, and Cannabis, and headed to **Namib Naukluft Park**, passing zebra and springbok on the way to the red sands of **Kuiseb Canyon**. When we reached the towering crests of the **Tsondab Plain**, we strapped on our skis and carved fresh paths down the dunes. A couple of days later, we skied the dune ridge above the coastline known as the **Long Wall**, where we looked down on crashing waves full of seals to one side and miles of sand to the other. On our final day we summited a dune overlooking the flamingo-filled **Sandwich Harbour**. As I headed into my descent, I thought, who needs snow? [offroadtours-namibia.com](http://offroadtours-namibia.com)

## TREND

**FLORENCE FOR FOOD LOVERS**

Bring your appetite—and some extra luggage—the next time you visit Florence. This year, three new culinary emporiums are making the Tuscan capital

even more of a food destination. The famous **Central Market** (*Piazza del Mercato Centrale*) unveiled its refurbished top floor in April. Open until midnight, the market houses 10 shops selling regional delicacies. Last December, an outpost of the gastronomy megastore **Eataly** ([eataly.com](http://eataly.com)) opened near the

Duomo, equipped with classrooms for wine lessons; restaurants; and counters selling cheeses, meats, and produce. And ambitious home cooks will love **Desinare** ([desinare.it](http://desinare.it)), a new kitchen design shop and cooking school located within the **Riccardo Barthel** concept store. —J.M.

