

TEXT

HEIN VAN BEEK

# GENERATION NEXT

KASTEELHOEVE DE KERCKHEM

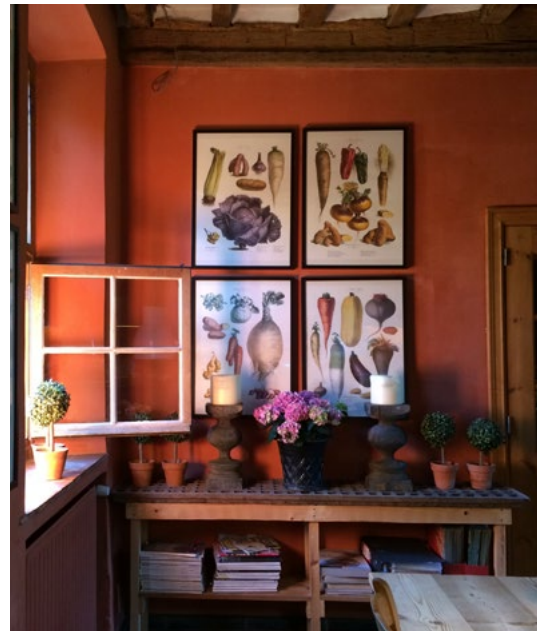
Wijer-Nieuwerkerken, Belgium

TESSA VAN DAM MERRETT AND HER HUSBAND ERIK FELDHAUS VAN HAM, BOTH ORIGINALLY FROM THE NETHERLANDS, ARE LOOKING TO THE FUTURE, AND NOT ONLY THEIR OWN, BUT ALSO THAT OF THEIR CHARMING FARMHOUSE HOTEL AND RESTAURANT DE KERCKHEM. THEIR PARADISE OF HOSPITALITY IS IN BELGIAN LIMBURG, IN THE ROLLING GREEN REGION OF HASPENGOUW. →





'Our son Nanne and his girlfriend Lucie did a course in Ireland at Darina Allen's famous Ballymaloe Cookery School in Shanagarry, County Cork,' Tessa explains. 'Afterwards they were looking for a place to start their own hospitality business. Nanne and Lucie have a lot of hospitality and culinary experience, and I can tell you that Lucie's desserts are truly phenomenal – she worked as a pastry chef in London at the Michelin-starred restaurant Portland. When they were staying with us at the end of their "grand tour", they proposed the idea that we should continue running De Kerckhem together. Which is wonderful! We're getting older, and now De Kerckhem's future is assured.' →



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‘JUST LOOK AROUND YOU, YOU’D  
NEVER WANT TO LEAVE A PARADISE  
LIKE THIS, WOULD YOU?’



'We divide the jobs between us – looking after the vegetable and flower gardens, coming up with recipes, and maintaining and renovating the farmhouse. What's great is that Lucie, Nanne and I cook two nights a week each. There's a nice variety in our dishes, each with our own signature, which is something our guests love.'

Are they planning to go back to the Netherlands when they're older? 'I don't think so. We've been living and working here for 24 years now and we've built everything up ourselves. Just look around you, you'd never want to leave a paradise like this, would you?' ■

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## BALLYMALOE COOKERY SCHOOL

Courses at the school focus not only on cooking techniques with a Slow Food philosophy, but also on growing the right organic vegetables.

Ballymaloe is truly one of the best cookery schools in the world, attracting international students from far and wide who are seeking culinary knowledge and experience.

[COOKINGISFUN.IE](http://COOKINGISFUN.IE)

