



## TRAVEL AND LEISURE MAGAZINE

April 2006



### VINE AND DINE

**What better to compliment good wine than wonderful food? Top quality winery restaurants can be a bonus to both winemaker and wine tourist, as Matthew Evans discovered.**

Fresh air so pure it wears a halo, the timeless beauty of the vines, vistas that few, if any urban restaurants can match, a surplus of reasonably priced wines and the ability to offer everything in the tasting room by the glass.

Combine this with wine styles that are becoming more food friendly after the over-oaked 1990's, and the fact that where there's good wine there are people who also want to eat well., and the emergence of the serious winery restaurant makes perfect sense.

Indeed, in a time of wine surplus (about 2.5 billion litres of Australian wine remain unsold at the end of last year), the winery restaurant can prove a bonus, though most vignerons still don't want the burden of managing a full-on restaurant.

For those with the time and the inclination, the evolution of wine tourism has become a viable, and enjoyable, offshoot of the main event. The challenge for the traveller, however, is eating well. Winery restaurants remain places where the tried and true is usually favoured over the experimental, as wine usually performs better with classical European cuisine.

Winery restaurants, like regional restaurants, have yet to reach their potential. Yet in terms of options, there are plenty. Food and wine matching is on the rise, with most using wine-friendly dishes to showcase their tipples, though dessert always feels like an afterthought.

The field in Australia should, however, be more competitive. Perhaps it's the casual nature of winery tourism, the fledgling nature of the winery restaurant, or the fickleness of dining in regional Australia. Or maybe it's the struggle to find talented staff, but we weren't overawed by some of the choices, particularly in New South Wales.

Victoria's Mornington Peninsular contributes two to our list of Australia's great winery restaurants, but we were most impressed with Western Australia's Margaret River region. With four entries in our top 10, Margaret River proves that a beautiful region, with focus on quality, can entice diners' dollars to restaurants that do both the wines and the locality justice. Along with others in our list, including one from Tasmania, we're proud to call these the finest winery restaurants in the nation.



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#### *TOP 10 AUSTRALIAN WINERY RESTAURANTS*

##### **CLAIRAULT**

Margaret River, Western Australia

Those who knew Clairault's former, modest cellar door will be amazed at how the place has matured. Wander up a garden path, through well kept lawns, dotted with trees, up to a curved tasting bench.

At the end of one bar sit glass-covered plates piled with nougat and macadamia tarts, to the other sits the dining room. The restaurant looks out through the trees and across the vines. Timber plays a big part, in the tables, floors and deck, and timber doors fold back on fair weather days so you can drink in the fresh air.

On our visit, chef Luke Clarke was away, but there was hardly a ripple of inconsistency. The cured scallops with sushi rice and pickled radish were as pretty as a pink wine, the pork belly a slow cooked sensation. Goat's cheese was wrapped in a kataifi shredded pastry shawl and served with berries as dessert.

Managed by Conor Martin, a member of the family that owns and runs the vineyard, there's little more you'd expect from a winery restaurant. You'd drink the house wines on a visit, particularly aged cabernet sauvignon or chardonnay.





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### SUMMER BERRIES, KATAIFI-WRAPPED GOAT'S CURD, CAPE PINK REDUCTION

250g strawberries, hulled and quartered  
300g mixed berries (raspberries, blueberries and blackberries)  
Kataifi-Wrapped Goat's Curd  
2 teaspoons honey  
250g goat's curd  
75g ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup) pistachios, very finely chopped  
1 x 375g packet kataifi pastry  
150g unsalted butter, melted  
Cape Pink Reduction  
600ml Clairault's Cape Pink, or any good rosé  
130g caster sugar  
1 cinnamon stick  
6 peppercorns  
6 cloves  
1 star anise  
1 vanilla bean, split  
2 cardamom pods  
Rind of 1 lemon, in wide strips with all white pith removed

For rosé reduction, combine wine and caster sugar in a saucepan, bring slowly to the boil, stirring occasionally to dissolve sugar then cook over medium-high heat for about 10 minutes or until reduced by a quarter. Add spices, vanilla bean and lemon rind, reduce heat and simmer for another 5 minutes then cool and refrigerate until required. Syrup can be made up to 3 days in advance. Strain just before using, discarding solids.

For kataifi-wrapped goat's curd, combine honey and goat's curd in a bowl and stir to combine well. Using 2 dessert spoons, form spoonfuls of mixture into 6 neat lozenge shapes, then roll in chopped pistachios to lightly coat. Refrigerate goat's curd shapes for 20 minutes or until firm. Preheat oven to 200°C and lightly grease a baking tray.

Loosen pastry until strands are separated, light and fluffy. Lay out pastry strands to form 6 rectangles about 25cm long and 6-7cm wide; you will not need all of the pastry. Brush liberally with melted butter. Place a goat's cheese lozenge along a narrow end of one piece of pastry then roll up, tucking edges of pastry in as you go, to completely enclose. Place pastries on prepared tray, brush with melted butter then bake for 10-12 minutes until pastry is golden. To serve, divide berries among bowls or plates then pour over reduction. Divide warm kataifi-wrapped goat's curd among bowls and serve immediately.

Serves 6

**Wine suggestion** Clairault Cape Pink, 2005

