

RAS TIMES

THE FOOD ISSUE 2022

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A NEW STYLE OF BREW
Beer & Cider

**HARD TO SAY, SO GOOD
TO DIGEST**
Smallgoods and Charcuterie

HOW SWEET IT IS...
Professional Bakery

* *THE FOOD ISSUE*



*“We fix up the dinners
For parsons and sinners
And lawyers and bishops
and showmen”*

ANDREW BARTON (BANJO) PATERSON (1864 - 1941)

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Publisher: Royal Agricultural Society of NSW
ISSN: 1836-6724. 1 Showground Road, Sydney Olympic Park, NSW 2127
T: 02 9704 1111
Email: editor@rasnsw.com.au
Website: www.rasnsw.com.au
Editor: Meredyth Hayes Bell
Editorial Coordinator: Samantha Cannings
Art Director: Belinda Third, Cass and Co Creative
Contributors: Tim Browne, Lyndey Milan
Photography: Monde Photo: Paul K Robbins, Elliott Housego, Steven Markham & Nigel Owen
Cover: Brooke Lark, Unsplash
Unsplash Photography: Todd Quackenbush, Max Delsid, Anima Visual, Madie Hamilton, Flor Saurina, Alex Ivrs, Yoav Aziz, Michele Dot Com, Abbie Tanner, Martin Katler, Lasseter Winery, Maja Petric
Print: Brightset Printing

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Letter from the Editor

In this special issue of your RAS Times magazine, promoting the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW's prestigious Sydney Royal Wine, Dairy and Fine Food competitions, you will discover not only the role we are playing in ensuring the produce we consume is the absolute best, but we will also highlight producers and products you should be looking for. We have included must-try recipes, using Sydney Royal medal-winning ingredients, prepared by Tim Browne, Sydney Showground's Executive Chef, and some tips from food and beverage experts.

Sydney Royal competitions promote the pursuit of excellence across ten classifications in Wine, Dairy, Fine Food, and Beer & Cider, with all entrants – also known as exhibitors – striving for a Champion medal and entry to the President's Medal. Attracting entries from all over the country, our Sydney Royal competitions are recognised as amongst the most prestigious and trusted in Australia.

All Sydney Royal Champion, Gold, Silver, and Bronze medal winners are encouraged to include the medal artwork on their packaging, helping their product stand out on supermarket shelves and in fridges and making it easier for discerning consumers to make sure they are purchasing award-worthy products.

From regional markets to gourmet delicatessens, supermarkets to independent grocers and pantry doors, Sydney Royal medal-winning products range from mother and daughter or small family operations to franchises, supermarket home brands and even grocery giants. With all judging done 'blind' without any branding on packaging, it is an even playing field and a truly unbiased assessment of specialty foods. When you purchase any Sydney Royal medal-winning product you can be sure you are supporting an Australian producer and enjoying food that is not only Australian-grown but also proudly Australian-made.

Meredyth Hayes Bell
Royal Agricultural Society of NSW



Judging time, Sydney Royal competitions



And so it began

It is a well-regarded truism, without farmers we'd be naked, hungry and sober. What is not so widely known is that if it wasn't for a group of forward-thinking early settlers to Sydney in 1822 the produce we are wearing, eating and drinking would perhaps be less than the best.

The Agricultural Society of NSW was established on 5 July 1822 by some of the new colony's most prominent citizens, they knew there was a need to improve the quality of agricultural produce in the colony, to promote better farming practices, and to fund and organise the import of pure-bred sheep, cattle and horses.

In 1823 competitions were held to 'excite in proprietors an ambition to excel each other'. Best colonial-bred stallion, bull and heifer were judged, and a silver tankard for a sample of plug tobacco was awarded.

As the colony grew so too the scope of the Agricultural Society expanded,

the livestock competitions were strong - with two Shows held each year for judging sheep, cattle and horses, along with a random selection of pigs. In 1824 the judging of alcohol commenced - beer and cider, followed by the first wine competition in 1826.

Distilled spirits and liqueurs were judged from 1870, goat's wool from 1876 and in 1888 the introduction of an arts and crafts competition quickly saw the emergence of cheese and butter, coffee, fruit and honey competitions.

Competitions evolved, responded to consumers' tastes and trends amongst producers, and continued to safeguard the agriculture of New South Wales. From the establishment of the Wine and Dairy Produce Committees in 1902 to jam, pickle, scone and chocolate judging in 1918, a close eye was kept on local offerings. Introducing pastry and sauce competitions in the years 1920-1928 and even potato crops in 1930, further allowed the Society to keep a close eye on the produce we consume.

By the 1990s cheese and dairy produce had their own competition, apiculture as well, and the Fine Food Committee was formed in 1997. The Committee oversees competitions attracting over 5,000 entries each year from Australian producers, judged by industry experts, in pursuit of a Sydney Royal Medal or Champion title. The Wine, Dairy, and Fine Food Competitions comprise of Wine, Cheese & Dairy Produce, Aquaculture, Beer & Cider, Branded Meat, Oil & Olives, Pasta, Professional Bakery, Smallgoods & Charcuterie, and Specialty Foods. ■



How does the judging process work?

Sydney Royal food competitions are judged by an independent panel, chosen for their expertise within their industry. Judges come from a broad range of industry sectors including product retailers, manufacturers, food journalists, and industry educators. The RAS also operates the Sydney Royal Associate Judge Program to help recruit and train the next generation of judges.

Each competition is overseen by a Chair of Judges and includes separate judging panels who assess products through a blind tasting. Products are then scored using a points-based system and measured against a pre-determined set of benchmark scores. Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals are awarded to products meeting the respective benchmark, allowing producers to compare their product against industry standards.

The benchmark scores are dictated by each industry and vary across the different competitions, however as a general rule - Bronze indicates a good quality product, Silver an excellent quality product, and Gold an outstanding product.



To ensure consistency, and eliminate any bias, judges scores are required to fall within a narrow range of one another for each individual product. Any products receiving a large discrepancy in scores must be re-assessed and discussed until a more uniform score can be agreed upon.

Once judges scores are finalised, Gold-medal products within each category are re-assessed in a blind tasting, by an expanded panel of judges, to determine overall champion products. ■

Each competition is overseen by a Chair of Judges and includes separate judging panels who assess products through a blind tasting.





Seafood and eat it

THE SYDNEY ROYAL AQUACULTURE COMPETITION

WORDS SAMANTHA CANNINGS

Aquaculture can be defined as the breeding and harvesting of aquatic animals and plants for food, including oysters, prawns, mussels, yabbies, marine and freshwater fish. It is the fastest growing food sector in the world and is now responsible for over 50% of all seafood consumed worldwide.

The industry may be dominated globally by Asia, but according to Sydney Royal Aquaculture competition Chair of Judges, John Susman, the Australian aquaculture scene is exciting, progressive, and growing stronger every day.

“We are seeing next generation operators, professional investment and some amazing seafood being produced at “world’s best” standard, both environmentally, culinarily, and commercially”, John said.

Despite the strength of the industry in Australia, the majority of seafood we eat is actually imported. As a seafood loving nation, our demand for fresh produce is much higher than our waters can produce.

“Australia is the oldest and driest continent on the planet”, John said. “Our waters are relatively barren of nutrients, making the wild seafood resource limited in its volume and availability. The result is the need for imports. This only further highlights the need and the opportunity for domestically produced, farmed seafood”.

It is easy to forget that aquaculture is essentially no different from terrestrial farming, subject to the same natural disasters and effects of climate change. The floods on Australia’s East Coast in 2021 and 2022 had a significant impact on the aquaculture industry. Operators in the river, lake and estuary systems were particularly affected, with Sydney Rock Oyster farmers in Northern NSW having one of their most challenging seasons on record.

The Sydney Rock Oyster is unique to the east coast of Australia, and accounts for 90% of NSW total oyster production. In cool conditions, this species has a rare ability to live out of the water for 3 weeks, meaning that fresh product can be available almost anywhere in Australia, any time throughout the year.

When managed properly, oyster farming is a sustainable industry, with an important role to play in maintaining estuary health. Oysters act as a natural filter, removing algae, excess nutrients, and pollutants from waterways, to improve water quality and protect their environment. Because of this, oyster health can often provide early indications of environmental damage.

Oysters have long been labelled as an aphrodisiac. However, the jury is still out on this one! What is undisputed, are their nutritional benefits. Oysters are high in vitamins and minerals, low in cholesterol, and rich in Omega-3 fatty acids - which have been linked to protection against heart disease, anti-inflammatory responses, and improved blood flow.



Tips from an expert JOHN SUSMAN

It is important that we all play a part in the concept of sustainability, this includes choosing whole seafood and using as much of it as possible.

PRAWNS

When buying prawns, use them all – peel the head and shell to make a tasty stock, soup, or sauce, while retaining the precious meat for the hero ingredient in another dish.

“Seafood is special and precious, make the most of it and think sustainably in the kitchen.” *John Susman*

FISH

Buy whole fish, and even if you ask the fishmonger to break it down for you, make sure to use all of it:

- Use the centre cut portions for that special dinner party.
- Marinate the wings and fins for a BBQ.
- The belly and scraping from the bones can be used for poke or pasta
- Once again, use the heads and frame for a stock, soup, or sauce.



John Susman has over 35 years of experience across the seafood industry. He owns and operates various seafood catching, growing, processing and distribution businesses throughout Australia, and is owner of the specialist seafood consultancy, FISHTALES. John has also worked at famed fish markets in Tokyo, New York, and Paris, and has been marketing Australian seafood across the globe for decades.

A new style of brew

THE SYDNEY ROYAL BEER & CIDER SHOW

Why does beer contain alcohol... and can you brew an ale without it?

The alcohol in beer is ethanol (ethyl alcohol) and it is created through a process called fermentation during which the sugar contained in the malted grain (or barley) is consumed by yeasts. After they have digested it, it is converted to alcohol.

So in short, alcohol is not added to beer – it is a natural process in the brewing of beer. However, you can reduce or remove the alcohol – either by steam distillation or by the process of reverse osmosis.

Steam distillation takes place in a vacuum, the temperature is lowered enough for the alcohol to evaporate. Reverse osmosis involves separating the flavour molecules which are added back in once the alcohol is removed.

Why would a brewer take these extra steps? And is it worth it?

In 2021 the Macquarie Dictionary shortlisted “sober curious” as a candidate for their much-anticipated Word of the Year - the award went to “strollout”, used to describe the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination program in Australia.

“Sober curious” means to have an interest in reducing one’s consumption of alcohol or in giving it up altogether, be it for the physical and emotional health benefits, financial reasons, or even for a less chaotic lifestyle.

Brewers have been quick to respond and the rise of no or low alcohol beer has been remarkable.

Some of Australia’s leading beer brands including Carlton, Great Northern and Coopers produce no-alcohol lagers and pale ales, and Lion imported a \$6 million plant from Germany to make James Squire

Zero beer. Craft brewers have also tapped into the trend, creating a range of ales, stouts and porters with the flavour of a full-strength brew.

This year the Sydney Royal Beer & Cider Show introduced no alcohol as a standalone class, previously these brews were entered into the Experimental class.

Sydney Royal judges assessed thirteen no alcohol and twenty-two low or reduced alcohol beers, awarding 3 Gold, 9 Silver, and 8 Bronze medals – an incredible success rate of 57% in the first year of the classes. The Gold winners to look for, if you are keen to tempt your tastebuds with No or Low alcohol beer are Bridge Road Brewers Free Time Alcohol Free Pale Ale (classed as zero alcohol because it is less than 0.5% alcohol), Cronulla Beer Co Easy Tiger (a low 3.5% alcohol), and Gage Roads Side Track All Day XPA (a low 3.5% alcohol). ■



Looking for some alcohol in your beer?

The Sydney Royal Beer & Cider Show judges awarded Champion titles to Wayward Brewing Co for their Wayward Raspberry Berliner Weisse, Sydney Brewery for their Sydney Brewery Speak Easy Black IPA, and Australian Brewery for their Reign of Darkness. It is also worth looking out for any brews by Philter Brewing, winners of an impressive 5 Gold medals, 8 Silver medals and 6 Bronze – an outstanding result of 19 medals from 21 entries for a brewery which has only just celebrated its 5th birthday!



What you need to know about meat

THE SYDNEY ROYAL
BRANDED MEAT COMPETITION

WORDS MEREDYTH HAYES BELL



Branded Beef

Two minutes and 40 seconds is all it takes to cook the perfect Wagyu steak. Carefully sliced to 10mm thickness and passing through the cooking chamber before resting for exactly two minutes, the steak is at its optimum flavour point. The fatty, marbled flesh tastes rich and gently sweet, with a lingering savoury taste.

For those of us who don't have an elaborate commercial kitchen cooking chamber and will be sizzling our wagyu in a pan, always start with your meat at room temperature and season it with a sprinkle of salt. Sear it in a hot pan for one minute on each side before removing it from the heat, wrapping it in foil and resting for 3 to 5 minutes – to allow it to reabsorb its juices. You can then sear it again, 30 seconds on each side, rest it for 3 minutes, and then enjoy a melt-in-your-mouth medium-rare wagyu!

Sydney Royal judges savour slithers of wagyu in their quest to find the perfect steak in the Branded Beef competition but it is not all high-end wagyu (currently selling for around \$150 kg) tempting their finely tuned tastebuds. The competition also assesses grass fed beef and grain fed beef with some previous winners available from your butcher at a more family-friendly \$40kg.

What's the difference between grass fed and grain fed beef?

Grass fed cattle roam freely around lush green paddocks, embodying the image of Australia as having the cleanest, greenest meat in the world. Depending on where they are, the grasses they graze on are determined by climate and region and include ryegrass, phalaris, prairie grass, paspalum and kikuyu. Some legumes including white/red clover and lucerne can also make up a small proportion of the grazing paddocks. Grass fed beef has lower levels of saturated fat than grain fed.

Grain fed cattle are given a grain-based diet for at least 60 days, following an early life spent grazing in paddocks they are moved into feedlots and fed combinations of wheat, barley, sorghum and even triticale. The switch to grains can be made because the pasture is poor – as a result of drought or flooding, grain feed produces whiter fat and higher marbling, and increases the size of the animal.



And wagyu? A Japanese word – 'wa' means Japanese and 'gyu' means cattle – wagyu is a breed of cattle native to Japan... however, Australia is now one of the biggest producers of wagyu beef in the world thanks to the importation of Japanese genetics which were cross bred with Hereford and Angus. The result is a highly marbled, melt-in-your-mouth beef with a delicious velvety flavour.

Branded Pork

Our judges never hesitate to get some pork on their fork – the other white meat is served in approximately 706 million meals a year in Australia and the health benefits include iron, protein for muscle tissue, energy and vitamins B6 and B12. The Branded Pork competition welcomes entries of boneless and skinless pork loins – perfect for a classic roast.



Branded Lamb

So our beef is world-famous but aren't we the country that rode the sheep's back? The Branded Lamb competition assesses whole 8-rib racks and looks at eating quality and consistency, giving marks for visual/texture – raw, aroma – cooked, tenderness, juiciness, flavour, and overall liking... much like any of us in our kitchen at home. Names like Milly Hill, Margra Lamb and Thomas Foods International have produced impressive exhibits in the past, with Milly Hill Lamb the recipient of the 7th Annual President's Medal for their free-range grass fed lamb in 2012 and continuing to pick up Sydney Royal Champion and Gold medals for the past ten years. ■

So much more than milk

THE SYDNEY ROYAL CHEESE AND DAIRY PRODUCE SHOW



One of the most prestigious competitions in the industry, the Sydney Royal Cheese and Dairy Produce Show is a proud reflection of Australia's extensive and varied dairy industry, drawing entries from some of the best dairy producers across the country.

While the competition has only gone by its current name since 1993, its origins can be traced back to the Sydney Royal Easter Show in 1858, when prizes were awarded for fresh and salted butter. Cheese was judged for the first time a few years later, with both products becoming consistent categories in the Farm Produce section at the Show from 1869.

In 1907, Dairy Produce officially became its own competition, expanding over the years to include ice cream, yoghurt, cream, gelato, dairy desserts, and flavoured milk. Non-bovine products were added from the late 1990's, with camel milk the most recent addition in 2018.

Products entered in the Sydney Royal Cheese and Dairy Produce Show are judged on flavour, aroma, texture, and presentation. This year saw a high standard of products, with 72 Gold

medals, 134 Silver, and 157 Bronze shared across almost three quarters of entrants. A standout category was ice cream and gelato, with almost all entries picking up a medal. There were also some exceptional buffalo, sheep, and goat products.

So what makes a Champion dairy product? According to Chair of Judges, Tiffany Beer, it all starts with great quality milk. Tiffany stresses the expertise needed by producers to understand the characteristics of the milk, and to make products suited to the milk, while ensuring the product is exposed to ideal conditions at all stages of production.

Determining a Champion dairy product takes a high level of skill. If you're a cheese or ice-cream lover, being a dairy judge might seem like a dream come true, but getting started is not as out of reach as you might think.

Alexandre Grenouiller and Janina Jancu are two of the industries newest associate judges, having recently completed the Sydney Royal Associate Judge Program.

While it takes many years of experience to transcend to a fully qualified judge, Alex and Janina are excited for the journey. They had a chat to the RAS about turning their passion for all things dairy into a rewarding endeavour.



THE UDDER TRUTH

As a dairy loving nation, the average Australian consumes almost 95 litres of milk per year (that's the volume of an average bath) and eats over 13kg of cheese (the weight of an average toddler!)

Dairy is Australia's third largest rural industry, behind beef and wheat, with around 32% of our production exported.

Although milk-based products were judged at the Show from the 1870's, with a focus on the best methods of preserving milk - plain, fresh, homogenised milk was not judged until 2002.

Many other products have been exhibited as part of the Dairy Produce section over the years, including ham, bacon, lard, honey, and chocolate.



Spotlight on ALEXANDRE GRENOUILLER

On why he became a judge:

I have been working at Penny's Cheese Shop in Potts Point for about a year. Penny has been judging for a long time and she inspired me to get involved. As a trained hospitality all-rounder, I believe I have a decent nose and palate, developed for wine initially, then eventually for cheese and other foods. Penny's encouragement helped me take that next step and become a judge.

On the judging program:

The two-day judging program was eye-opening. It was very interesting to learn about the process of judging and I felt inspired to play a part in supporting small Australian producers, working

hard day-in, day-out, on the farms. The whole RAS vision is fantastic, and we need younger generations to continue supporting it.

On his experience at this year's Show:

It was exciting to step into the role of an associate judge this year, from putting on the uniform and meeting fellow judges, to discovering products and discussing them with the panel. Each judge brings their own expertise and knowledge to the conversation, and there was so much to be learnt from a day on the judging panel. This year I only judged cream and butter, but I'm interested to try more classes in the future.



Spotlight on JANINA JANCU

On why she became a judge:

My husband and I developed a love for cheese over 25 years ago. I eventually began stewarding at the Sydney Royal competition and have loved working with the judges each year. I wanted to expand on the contribution that I could make, bring a consumer lens to the judging, and bolster the ranks of the judging panels, so I enrolled in the judging program.

On the judging program:

I loved learning more about the dairy industry, what goes into making a good product, and the challenges faced by the industry. The course helped me understand the sensory nature of judging - the importance of smell, taste, look and feel. The instructors were extremely knowledgeable and made the program fun and informative. I also enjoyed meeting the other participants, who came from a variety of backgrounds and brought diverse insights.

On her experience at this year's Show:

The judging program provided me with confidence, knowledge, and what to expect on the day. The judges were very generous with sharing their time and expertise. I've come away with a better understanding of the wide range of quality in Australian dairy products and how outstanding produce stands out. I also gained some insight into the impact of rain and floods on producers and dairy products. I have a bit of a sweet tooth, so gelato was my favourite to judge!



RECIPE

Meredith Dairy Dill Goats Cheese Chevre and beetroot hummus tart with zaatar and Rio Vista Olives Merchant Spiced Olive Oil (V)

INGREDIENTS

- 150gm Meredith Dairy Dill Goats Cheese Chevre
- 20gm zaatar
- 40ml Rio Vista Olives Merchant Spiced Olive Oil
- Baby herbs (mint, parsley or sorrel)

Beetroot hummus

- 400gm fresh beetroot
- 125gm chickpeas soaked and boiled until soft (you can use 400gm tin of chickpeas)
- 60gm tahini
- 1 lemon juiced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 garlic clove crushed

Sour cream pastry tart

- 125gm sour cream
- 250gm plain flour
- 200gm unsalted butter, chilled and diced

METHOD

Make the tart pastry by adding the flour and butter to a food processor and pulse until it forms a fine breadcrumb. Add the sour cream and pulse until it is incorporated, remove and wrap in cling wrap and rest in fridge for 30mins. Remove dough from fridge and roll out the dough to 4mm thick, line your tart moulds, use a fork and prick the pastry and bake at 200 for 12-15 mins or until golden.

Wash beetroot well and place on a large piece of foil, season with olive oil and salt and pepper. Wrap tight and bake in oven for 1 hour or test with a skewer to check they are cooked through. Cool, peel and cut in quarters. Add chickpea to a food processor and blend until fine, add all other ingredients and blend until smooth. You might need to add a little cold water. Season to taste.

To assemble spoon the beetroot hummus into the tart, top with a piece of the dill goat's cheese. Sprinkle with zaatar, drizzle the Merchant Spiced Olive Oil and garnish with baby herbs from the garden. Enjoy! ■

Tim Browne | Executive Chef



A most divisive fruit

THE SYDNEY ROYAL
OLIVES AND OLIVE OIL
COMPETITION

WORDS SAMANTHA CANNINGS

Licorice. Anchovies. Blue Cheese. Vegemite. Olives. Despite their very obvious differences, these foods all seem to have one thing in common – people either love them, or they hate them. You might say they’re an acquired taste, one that some people will never develop. When it comes to olives, they are both a staple at many social gatherings, and a regular feature in surveys of the most hated foods. No matter which camp you’re in, this small fruit has a rich and fascinating history, both within and outside of the RAS.

The Olives & Oil competition is a subdivision of the Sydney Royal Fine Foods Show, a group of competitions that emerged out of a growing public interest in fine foods in the late twentieth century. Coinciding with the move to Sydney Showground, the Fine Food Show began in 1998, immediately incorporating olive oil as one of its competitions. Olives and other olive products joined the competition in 2007.

However, olives were actually one of the first food products that were judged by the RAS. In the early 1830’s, with the assistance of Governor Darling, the RAS developed a number of competitions to encourage settlers to grow crops for trade and export, thereby contributing to the prosperity of the colony. Records from 1832 detail a competition for the greatest number of olive plants, layers or cuttings, with first prize being 2,500 acres of land, tax-free! Sign me up for that one please!

Scientific studies have traced the existence of olive trees back to the Eastern Mediterranean region, some 6000-8000 years ago, long before written language was even invented. The olive tree gradually spread through the Mediterranean region, playing a significant role in various cultures. In Greek Mythology, it was the sacred tree of the goddess Athena. In ancient Egypt, olive branches were often selected for funeral bouquets, discovered in tombs thousands of years later. It has served as a symbol of peace in biblical stories, and a symbol of victory in the sporting arenas of Ancient Greece.

The Mediterranean climate provides the perfect conditions for olive trees, with 95% of the world’s olives grown there. In Australia, olives are grown in all six states, with the Murray Valley region in Victoria being our top producing area. However, Australia’s olive production still only accounts for less than 1% of global olive production. Olive trees live on average between 300-600 years, thanks to their slow growth, and their ability to resist common natural disasters such as fire and drought. However, there are a handful in existence today that are proven to be at least 2000 years old, some are thought to be older.

If by now you’re imagining a stroll through an exotic Mediterranean location, filled with beautiful olive groves, where you can just stretch out a hand and pluck a juicy olive straight from the tree – then I’m afraid I’ve led you up the wrong garden path. Fresh olives are actually so bitter, they are considered unpalatable. The ones that eventually reach our mouths have gone through a curing and fermentation process that removes most of the bitterness, and adds that salty, savouriness that we all love – well, some of us anyway! ■

Why were the two olives fighting?
They were pitted against each other



What did the bartender say when Charles Dickens ordered a martini?
Olive, or twist

10 facts about Olive Oil

1. Only a small number of olives are destined for the dinner table. The other 90% of harvested olives are ground down for the production of olive oil.
2. Spain is the largest producer of olive oil, producing around half of the world’s olive oil supply.
3. Greece is the largest olive oil consumer, with an average of 20 litres consumed per person.
4. Olive oil is technically a fruit juice, since olives are a fruit, and its juices are extracted the same way as other fruit’s. The extraction process for other oils is quite different.
5. Olive oil is judged by sensory properties in the same way that wine is. And olive oil connoisseurs enjoy comparing the taste of oils from different regions just as wine connoisseurs do.
6. Olive oil makes a great pairing with ice cream. The savory flavour offers the perfect contrast to the ice cream’s sweetness.
7. Drinking olive oil is a long-standing practice in many Mediterranean countries.
8. Olive oil contains vitamins A and E and can be a healthy basis for cosmetics such as soap, moisturisers, and shampoo.
9. Extra Virgin Olive Oil is considered to be the healthiest type of olive oil, as it is the least processed variety.
10. Both olive oil and olives are rich in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties, low in cholesterol, and high in mono-unsaturated fatty acids. Studies have shown this type of fat is linked to a number of health benefits, including a reduced risk of heart disease. Olives also contain beneficial bacteria and enzymes, thanks to the fermentation process.



Australians do it better

THE SYDNEY ROYAL PASTA COMPETITION



WORDS MEREDYTH HAYES BELL

Italy is the world's largest exporter of pasta – no surprise there. However, a lot of the pasta they are exporting is made with Australian grown durum wheat. Italian farmers cannot grow enough durum wheat to keep up with demands of pasta producers, resulting in almost half of Australia's durum being exported to Italy... where it is regarded by Italian millers as the best in the world. A little like selling ice to eskimos!

Even more mind boggling, Australians buying pasta imported from Italy are most likely buying pasta made from exported Australian durum... so why not just buy Australian made pasta. Wondering which one to buy? The Sydney Royal Fine Food Show Pasta Competition judges Australian produced 100% durum wheat pasta along with spelt wheat and gluten free classes. Then all you need to do is look for the Sydney Royal medal on the packaging and you know you're buying the best pasta in Australia – even the Italians would have to agree!

Pasta production in Australia is a \$512 million industry, and with no clear monopoly there's room for premium pasta products and everyday brands to sit side-by-side in high-end grocers and supermarket chains.

The roll call of Sydney Royal Pasta Gold medals includes Victoria's the Natural Pasta House, Mancini Pasta from Western Australia, and our home state pasta perfectionists including Bianco Kitchen, Peppe's Pasta, Pasta di Porto and Pasta Emilia.

The secret to award winning pasta, according to the Sydney Royal judges is the quality of the durum wheat and the texture it lends. Chair of Judges for the

Pasta Competition Di Miskelly believes the competition showcases Australian raw materials and excellence in manufacturing and is assessing the pasta on appearance - colour and freedom from impurities and other faults and eating quality - taste and texture. Similarly pasta judge Jo Anne Calabria is looking for pasta that tastes good, holds up to the cooking process, and holds the sauce. Both judges also place emphasis on the cooking guide supplied by the producer – this is what we follow at home so it needs to be right!

Want further proof Australian pasta is too good to resist? It's approximated sixty one percent of Australians have eaten pasta in the past seven days with 'spag bol' affectionately recognised as one of our national dishes. Of course, it is an Australian twist on Italian tagliatelle al ragu alla bolognese and in many kitchens the sauce comes out of a jar...but it's an easy and delicious introduction to the world of pasta for many households.

Durum wheat was first produced in Australia in the 1930s with a small plant breeding program established at the NSW Agriculture Glen Innes Experiment Farm.

It is predominantly grown in northern NSW, in the so-called 'golden triangle' between Moree, Narrabri and Inverell.



Sydney Royal pasta judge

JO ANNE CALABRIA

explains exactly how to cook pasta properly every time.

Pasta seems like it's simple to cook, right? Water + pasta = dinner! However, sometimes the supposedly simplest things prove to be the trickiest, follow these tips to success.

USE A LARGE POT AND LOTS OF WATER. All types of pasta, fresh, dried, filled, from long strands to shapes like lots of room to move while it cooks. Guide - 5 litres of water to cook 500g of pasta.

ALWAYS SALT THE WATER. Use a good pinch of salt - Guide 1tb to 5 litres water. Some say the water should taste like the sea. Salting the water seasons the pasta itself as it absorbs water while it cooks.

NEVER PUT OIL IN THE WATER. If there is not enough water in the pot the pasta will stick and if it's not stirred in first minute or two of cooking it will also stick. Oil will not stop this happening. And do not add oil to cooked pasta ...it just makes the sauce slip off the strands and makes for oily pasta!

DO NOT ADD THE PASTA TO THE POT UNTIL THE WATER IS AT A BRISK ROLLING BOIL, AND THEN STIR. Add all the pasta at once. Ease long strands of pasta into the pot and stir gently for the first minute or two. This will ensure the pasta does not stick, and it helps it cook evenly. Stir it occasionally as it cooks.

DO NOT RELY ON THE CLOCK and only use the packet instructions as a guide as to when the pasta will be ready. Just short of the suggested cooking time pull a strand or piece from the water and test it with your teeth. Cook it to your liking but the best pasta still has a little 'bite' or is 'al dente' (translated as to the tooth), as the Italians would say. It should have no raw centre.

BEFORE YOU DRAIN PRESERVE SOME OF THE PASTA WATER. Ladle a cup of cooking water into a bowl or measuring cup and reserve.

DRAIN YOUR PASTA ENOUGH TO REMOVE MOST OF THE WATER. Never rinse pasta. It will not only cool the pasta, it will make it stick. Transfer it back to the cooking pot and add a ladleful of the prepared sauce.

ADD SOME OF THE RESERVED PASTA WATER TO THE SAUCE...it helps the sauce adhere better to the pasta. It is also good to bring a split sauce (like a creamy one) back together. And if there is any leftover pasta ... add little of that reserved pasta water, it will ensure the pasta doesn't stick and reheats well!



Jo Anne Calabria is an accomplished recipe writer, food editor and content creator for both print and online publications. She has collaborated with clients providing food thought leadership for their brands, content platforms, and for their consumers, creating recipes, generating food ideas, and identifying opportunities for promoting clients' products. She is also a skilled 'hands-on' food professional with a depth of practical skills.

RECIPE

Casarecce pasta with roasted tomato agrodolce, eggplant, green pea, capers and pangrattato (VE)

INGREDIENTS

- 300gm Casarecce pasta
- 400gm Eggplant
- 120gm green peas
- 30gm capers
- ¼ bunch basil

Tomato Agrodolce

- 600gm Roma tomato
- 2 Garlic sliced
- 1 small Spanish onion
- ½ bunch basil
- 20gm sugar
- 30ml sherry vinegar

Pangrattato

- 500gm Sourdough
- 4 Garlic cloves crushed
- 1 lemon zested
- 1 bunch fresh thyme
- 120ml Olive oil
- Sea salt & pepper

METHOD

To make the pangrattato, remove crust from the sourdough and pulse into rustic crumbs in a food processor. Heat up a pan on medium heat then add olive oil, crushed garlic, thyme and lemon zest into the pan to fry for 1 min. Add sourdough crumb and fry till golden brown. Season with salt and pepper. Drain on a paper towel.

For the agrodolce preheat oven to 220 degrees. Cut Roma tomato into quarters, onion into thick slices and rough chop the basil. Mix tomato, onion, basil, garlic and olive oil then place in a baking dish. Season with salt & pepper and sprinkle sugar on top. Bake for 12-15 minutes or till caramelized. You want the little burnt edges. Remove from the oven and drizzle sherry vinegar straight away to deglaze. Set aside and allow to cool.

Dice eggplant into 2cm x 2cm cube and mix with olive oil, salt and pepper. Then lay in an oven tray and roast for 10 minutes.

Casarecce pasta can be used dry or fresh. Follow the cooking instructions and timing from the packaging.

Heat up a large pan with olive oil and fry capers for 1 min, then add cooked eggplant, peas and agrodolce. Toss though casarecce. Serve in a large, shared dish at the table topped with pangrattato and fresh basil leaves. Enjoy! ■

Tim Browne | Executive Chef

How sweet it is...

THE SYDNEY ROYAL PROFESSIONAL BAKERY COMPETITION

WORDS MEREDYTH HAYES BELL

By all reports, and across screens and pages of online surveys, the most popular cakes in Australia are lamingtons, chocolate cake, traditional fruit cake, banana bread, carrot cake, and the finger bun.

Whilst this is an argument that could go forever – what about custard tarts, lemon slice, classic sponge cake with jam and cream, red velvet and even apple cake – the one guaranteed absolute is where you can find the best cakes in Australia, and you don't have to look any further than the results in the Sydney Royal Professional Bakery competition.

The competition takes a close look at bread, cakes, pastry, biscuits and pies but it is cake day that arouses most interest amongst sweet-toothed spectators. Muffins and cupcakes, donuts and lamingtons, mud cakes and sponges, fruit loaf and banana bread, Christmas cakes and puddings, brownies and slices, sweet and savoury biscuits – it's an absolute baker's delight on judging days and the atmosphere is crying out for a cup of tea and a comfortable chair!

Want to enjoy morning or afternoon tea like a judge? Professional Bakery judge

Amanda Athis believes you should trust your eyes and nose as much as your tastebuds,

“Both visual appeal and aroma are very important, in that order. In fact, all senses are important and necessary. My first impression is visual followed closely by aroma to either match or challenge the first impression. Enjoying food involves experiencing every sense.”

And Amanda's favourite treat? Describing herself as a 'sweet tooth' Amanda has a weakness for French style classic cakes – perhaps a Mille Feuille, Canelé, or even a Gateau St. Honoré. Fortunately for Amanda these can be found in the Professional Bakery competition and have earned their makers Sydney Royal ribbons!

Without a doubt Bowral's Gumnut Patisserie has had an incredibly sweet ride to the top, boasting more Champion, Gold and Silver ribbons than you can poke a vanilla stick at. In fact, passers-by find it difficult to see inside their flagship Bowral store because the front windows display their incredible array of Sydney Royal ribbons and titles. The second bakery to win the prestigious President's Medal (12th Annual President's Medal won by Brasserie Bread), Gumnut Patisserie took home the 14th Annual President's Medal after receiving *Champion Cake*,

Champion Pastry and Best Professional Bakery Apprentice/Student Exhibit at the 2019 Sydney Royal Fine Food Show.

If a road trip to Gumnut Patisserie in NSW's Southern Highlands to see what the Sydney Royal judges deem champion-worthy isn't on the cards, other Sydney Royal medal-winners can be found in independent supermarkets, cafes and fresh food markets across Sydney. Names to look for include Falcones Bakery, Three Mills Bakery, Docletini Patisserie, Sacrebleu! Caneles and Co, Sonoma, Brasserie Bread, and Mick's Bakery for your bread, cakes, biscuits, pies and slices.

Professional Bakery judge and chef Adam Moore knows what he is looking for when judging. With formal qualifications in pastry, charcuterie and butchery, food styling and food photography, Adam has an eye on the structure of the baked good, flavour, texture, innovation and overall presentation. Particularly noting the apprentice class of the competition, Adam believes the Professional Bakery competition can not only help launch a bakery, but it is also an incredible stepping stone for a young baker and encourages apprentices to develop their skills and their careers. Apprentices at Gumnut Patisserie have consistently taken out the apprentice class with sweet treats including Lemon Meringue Twist, Choc Praline Croissant, and Caramelised Vanilla Slice. ■



“Both visual appeal and aroma are very important, in that order. In fact, all senses are important and necessary. My first impression is visual followed closely by aroma to either match or challenge the first impression. Enjoying food involves experiencing every sense.”

Amanda Athis, Professional Bakery judge



To market, to market, for goodies to eat

THE SYDNEY ROYAL
SPECIALTY FOODS COMPETITION



WORDS MEREDYTH HAYES BELL



Picture yourself at a regional foodie market, or in a gourmet delicatessen... you are spoilt for choice with locally produced preserves and dressings, rubs and salts, and an incredible assortment of vinegars, dips, and nuts. You can see cereals and seeds and plant-based products you have never even imagined, pickled and dried vegetables and fruits. There's chocolate and confectionery and coffee and cold-pressed juices... it is a gastronomic dream come true, a connoisseur's happy place and it is all manufactured in Australia with at least 85% Australian-grown ingredients and entered in the Sydney Royal Specialty Foods competition.

The judges use phrases like "rich earthy aroma," "decadent creamy consistency," "Intense full-length flavour, rounded and balanced," "an exciting product with excellent flavour profiles. The salt adds a complexity that helps balance the sweetness.," "Beautiful colour, beautiful intensity, very innovative, beautiful technique."

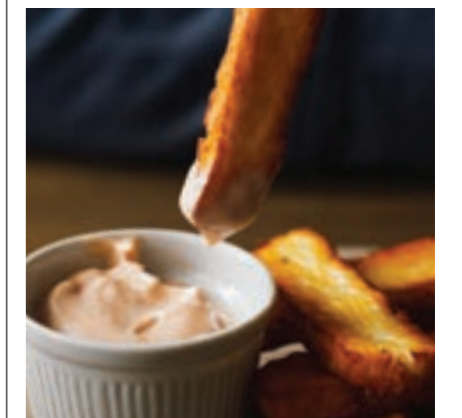
They are referring to Boutique Sauces Diane Sauce with Buttery Leek, Rice Culture Organic Vintage Miso, Salted Caramel - Fluffy Crunch Gourmet Fairy Floss, Longview Garlic Green Garlic Powder - all Sydney Royal Gold medal winners. They have also handed Gold to products including Long Track Pantry Blood Orange & Gin Marmalade, Julianne's Kitchen Tasmanian Smoked Salmon Pâté with Cucumber and Dill, Vivien & Alisha's Raw Honey and Almond Muesli, West Walla Farm Sriracha Mayonnaise, and Cornersmith Chilli Jam.

The roll call of names in the Specialty Foods competition also includes Singing Magpie Produce - famous for their semi-dried figs and quinces, Kielty's Irish Sauces from the Southern Highlands, and Sticky Balsamic - Australia's most awarded Balsamic Vinegar glaze, hand-crafted in regional Victoria.

The competition, at heart, pays tribute to local agricultural shows and the tables heaving with homemade jams and chutneys, and the produce markets which introduce early morning shoppers to hand-made dips and chocolates and marinades. Recognising those who think with a little more imagination, the Specialty Food competition welcomes those daring to tempt consumers with innovative new tastes including Lemon Pepper Relish (Women's Work), Sensual Sweet Lychee Chilli Sauce (Lychee Hill Estate), Turmeric & Ginger Sauerkraut (The Fermentier), and Quandong & Apple Syrup (Pandora's Palate).

There is no need to leave home for most of these specialty foods - you can shop online and read the stories behind the producers, their passion,

and their products. Or take a road trip and visit pantry doors along the way - Eclipse Organics in Richmond for some Gold medal herbs, rubs and spices or Hunt and Gather Fine Foods in Nowra for their Gold medal Lemon Butter... or Long Track Pantry in Jugiong for an assortment of medal winners including beetroot relish, or West Walla Farm in Walla Walla for handcrafted medal winning mayonnaise. Stop at regional and farmer's markets and look for Sydney Royal medal artwork on packaging and talk to the artisans responsible for handcrafted and homemade specialty foods.



The judges use phrases like "rich earthy aroma," "decadent creamy consistency," "Intense full-length flavour, rounded and balanced," "an exciting product with excellent flavour profiles. The salt adds a complexity that helps balance the sweetness.," "Beautiful colour, beautiful intensity, very innovative, beautiful technique."



RECIPE

Slow roasted Milly Hill lamb shoulder croquette with Wild Pepper Isle Tasmanian Pepperryberry & Kunzea Sea Salt and Newman's Horseradish aioli

INGREDIENTS

- ½ bunch dill for garnish

Croquette

- 1.8-2kg Milly Hill Lamb "Oyster" shoulder with bone
- 3 garlic cloves slices
- ½ bunch Fresh thyme
- 40ml extra virgin olive oil
- Sea Salt and freshly cracked black pepper
- 3 free range eggs
- 100ml Milk
- 150gm Plain flour
- 300gm Japanese bread crumb

Newman's Horseradish aioli

- 30gm Newman's Horseradish
- 20gm sour cream
- 100ml garlic aioli

METHOD

Pre heat oven to 120 degrees. Marinade lamb shoulder with garlic, thyme, olive oil and season with a good amount of salt and pepper. Place cast iron pot on stove on high until pot is hot. Seal lamb till golden brown. Remove from heat and put into oven with lid on for 4 hours. Once lamb is tender and bone can slide out, remove lamb from the pot and place it in a bowl. Place the pot with the lamb juice on the stove and reduce the lamb juice by 2/3. Meanwhile remove the bone from lamb shoulder and pull the lamb shoulder with your fingers or 2 forks. Once the reduced lamb juice is ready fold into the pulled lamb. Season to taste. While the lamb mix is warm roll them into balls which weigh around 30grams. Flat top and bottom gently to create a cylinder shape then chill in fridge and let them set for 1 hour.

Whisk eggs and milk together in a bowl. Place flour and bread crumbs in 2 different bowls.

Take lamb out of the fridge, dust in flour then drop into egg mixture, remove from egg mixture then roll into the breadcrumbs until all sides are coated.

Preheat oil in a pot to 160 degrees. While waiting for the oil, put horseradish, sour cream and garlic aioli into a bowl and mix well.

Once oil reaches to temperature, slowly place the lamb croquettes into the oil. (Do not over fill the pot). Once the lamb croquettes turn golden brown take them out and put on top of paper towel to absorb any excess oil.

Place the lamb croquettes on a platter, spoon the horseradish aioli on the top and garnish with fresh dill or any fresh herbs from the garden.

Season with a sprinkle of the Wild Pepper Isle Tasmanian Pepperyberry & Kunzea Sea Salt and fresh picked dill. Enjoy! ■

Tim Browne | Executive Chef

Hard to say, so good to digest

THE SYDNEY ROYAL SMALLGOODS AND CHARCUTERIE COMPETITION

WORDS SAMANTHA CANNINGS

When someone says charcuterie board, we immediately picture a colourful, artistic arrangement of deli meats, cheeses, breads, nuts, and condiments, that is so visually appealing it almost looks like it shouldn't be eaten.

These are the awe-inspiring images that flood our Instagram feeds and Pinterest boards, creating such a stir that learning how to create the 'perfect' board has become its own art form.

The modern-day charcuterie board has developed a sense of refinement, finding a universal popularity among home cooks, catered events, and even fine dining restaurants. But the beloved charcuterie board actually has very humble beginnings.

Charcuterie, in its simplest form, is any type of cured or preserved meat. The art of preserving meat can be traced back thousands of years. Long before refrigeration existed, ancient cultures were using techniques such as smoking and salting to draw out moisture from the meat and kill bacteria.

However, the term charcuterie was not used until 15th century France. Charcuterie boards were developed to ensure that no part of an animal would go to waste. These early boards were made up of offal and other preserved animal remains and varied by region depending on what meats were available.

In fact, the word 'charcuterie' is literally derived from the French words for flesh (chair) and cooked (cuit). Leave it to the French language to make 'cooked flesh' sound fancy!!

The charcuterie board has certainly undergone a transcendence over the last few centuries, and despite its origins, the term now carries a level of prestige. The Sydney Royal Fine Food Show acknowledged this when it changed the title of the Deli Meat competition to be 'Smallgoods & Charcuterie' in 2018.

The Smallgoods & Charcuterie category has also been represented in the President's Medal in recent years – including Barossa Fine Foods for their Fior Di Cotto, Poachers Pantry for their Smoked Duck Breast, Julianne's Kitchen for their Duck and Shiraz Pate with Shiraz Butter, and most recently, Sunshine Meats, nominated for their Smoked Duck Breast.

JULIANNE'S KITCHEN CHICKEN & ORANGE PATE

Made using specially sourced poultry, real butter, and topped with a layer of accompanying fruit, this award-winning pate from Julianne's Kitchen is smooth, silky, and full of flavour! A popular French delicacy, it is best served spread on a nice crusty bread.

4 HUNTERS DRY WORS

The name literally means dry sausage, and with no preparation needed, this is the perfect snack to add to your board. Some might say original is best, but if you can't get enough of these perfect sausage snacks, they also come in pepper, garlic, and hot chilli varieties.

OAK BLUE, BERRY'S CREEK GOURMET CHEESE

When deciding on what cheeses to add, this year's Sydney Royal Cheese & Dairy Produce Show's Champion Cheese of Show has to be at the top of your list. With complex, well-balanced flavours and a rich creamy texture, this blue cheese will assault your senses in the best possible way!

GOORAMADDA OLIVES MEDLEY

Fresh and fruity, with a hint of almond and plums, and a warm pungency that lingers. This Gooramadda Olives Medley is as good as they come and an absolute must to add to your charcuterie board.

PLEASE NOTE:
Images are representative only.

10 items to add to your CHARCUTERIE BOARD

Salami and prosciutto appear to be the most common meats included on today's charcuterie boards, but why not try mixing things up a bit with some of these other options below.

PUOPOLO ARTISAN SALUMI-PANCETTA FLAT (MILD)

An item that should always be on any charcuterie board, this Italian pancetta is made from dry cured pork belly and is packed with intense flavour, with a hint of sweetness. For all you spice-lovers out there, it also comes in a hot variety.

SUNSHINE MEATS SMOKED DUCK-BREAST

Marinated in a unique blend of spices, and then double smoked, with a layer of duck fat that just melts in your mouth – this delicacy is bursting with flavour! It's the addition to your charcuterie board that you never knew you needed! Trust us!

ANDREW'S CHICKEN CABANOSSI

Cabanossi is a popular Aussie choice, and Andrew's 100% chicken cabanossi will not disappoint. With the perfect level of spice, and a hint of smokiness, this one is sure to keep you coming back for more!

PINO'S DOLCE VITA TRUFFLE SALAMI

Take a break from normal salami and mix things up with this truffle variety. The sublime mix of traditional Italian free range pork, fresh cracked black pepper, sea salt and sliced black truffle is a treat for the tastebuds. In case of any dietary requirements, this one is also gluten free.

STAPLETON FAMILY MEATS BONELESS LEG HAM

Sometimes the simple options are the best! This mouth-watering ham tastes as good as it looks. It's made fresh on their premises in Gymea, using 100% Australian Pork, so you know you're supporting local farmers!



Cellar doors worth opening

THE SYDNEY ROYAL WINE SHOW



What's the most wine-derful time of the year? Christmas might seem like the obvious answer, with all its happy festivities and drink outings, but for those in the know, it's the annual KPMG Sydney Royal Wine Show, where we get to discover who's producing the best new drops in the industry.

This year's Show had plenty to boast about, with more than 1800 entries, just over 1000 medals awarded, and 30 Champion Trophies. South Australian wines came out on top, taking home half of the Champion Trophies, across 7 wineries, all within a 90-minute range of each other. Guess we all know where our next domestic holiday will be!

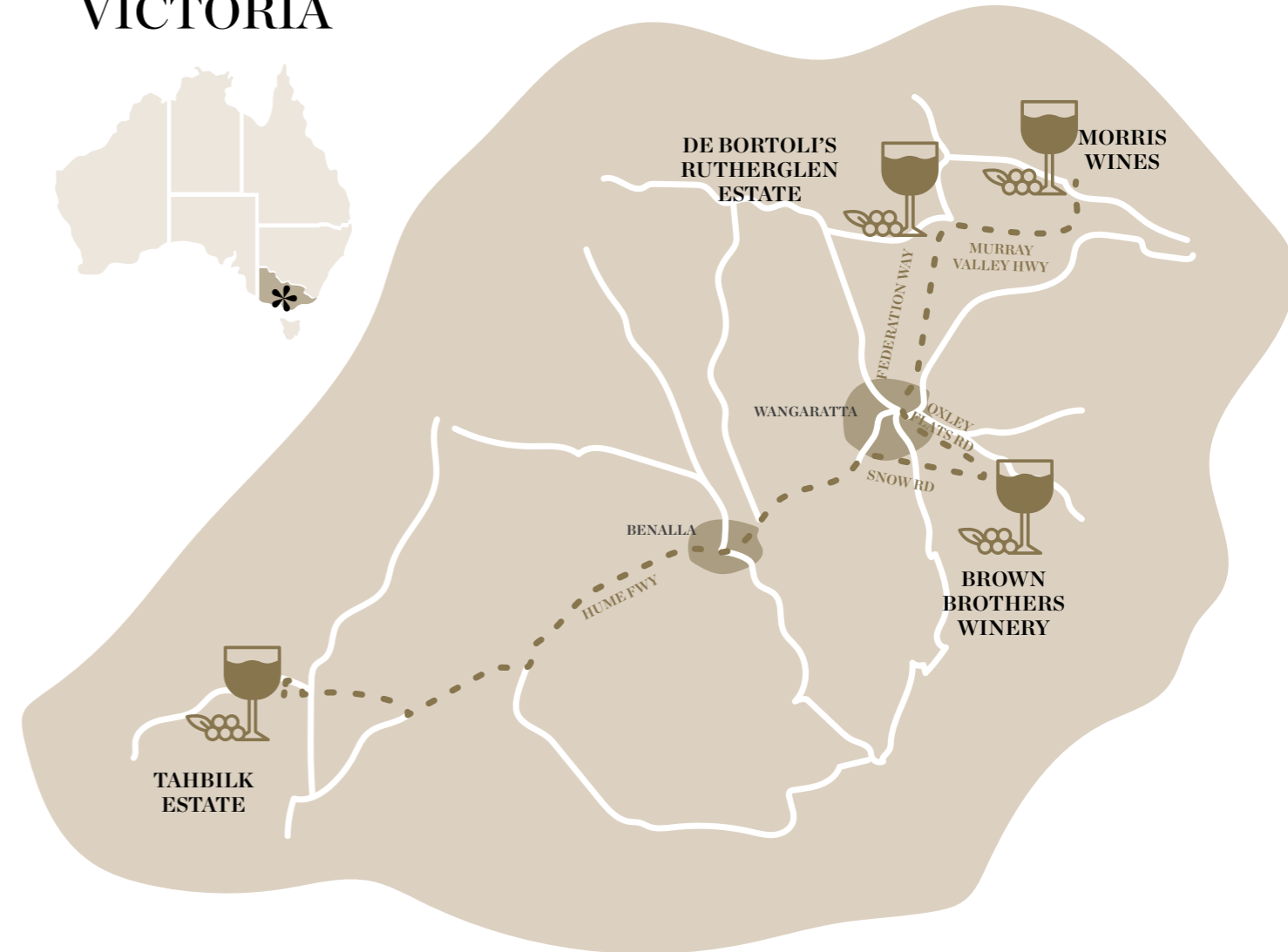
As always, the Wine Show brings out current trends in the industry and one of the most obvious this year was the resurgence of Chardonnay. A Chardonnay not only took out the top prize this year but was also represented in the Best Small Producer Wine, and Best Single Vineyard Wine, leading Chair of Judges, Sarah Crowe, to conclude that modern Australian Chardonnay is at its peak.

Also making an appearance among the Champion Trophy's were several other less common varietals, including Fiano, Arneis, and Tempranillo, and a number of exciting new blends. "A trend we saw repeatedly was the skill being directed towards blending varieties for deliciousness, producers are crafting wines that are complex and approachable without being constrained by tradition", said Sarah Crowe.

This year's Wine Show has lifted the veil on a range of exciting wines, just waiting to be explored, and what better way to do that than a road trip through some of Australia's best wine regions - a chance to support and give back to remote regions of Australia, while discovering some amazing new tipples to add to your wine collection.

The Hunter, Yarra and Barossa Valleys, as well as Margaret River, have long been known for their outstanding vineyards, however there are many other less travelled paths worthy of inclusion on any winery road trip. Check out some of the below options!

Take a wine tour in VICTORIA



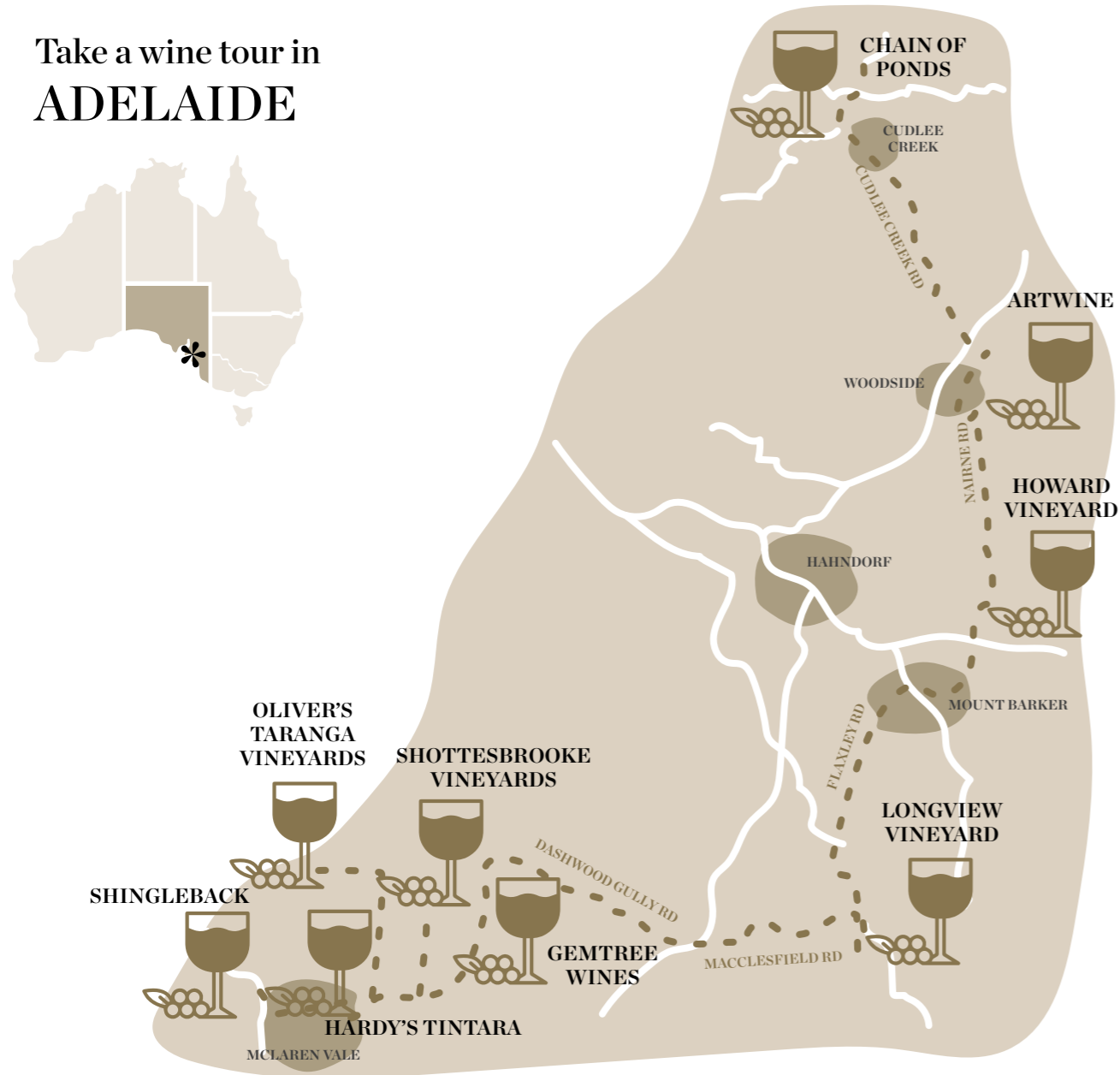
Northeast Victoria, just south of the NSW border, is home to a range of exciting award-winning wines and less common varietals, just waiting to be discovered! Start your journey in the **Goulburn Valley region** and head to **Tahbilk Estate** for a drop of their famous Marsanne. One of the world's rarest grape varieties, Tahbilk is the undisputed leading producer of this variety in Australia. Their 2015 Tahbilk '1927 Vines' Marsanne is developed from some of the oldest vines in the world and has impressed many a judge over the years. Be sure to check out what all the fuss is about!

From here, journey through the **King Valley** where you'll find a range of stunning wineries, including the immensely popular **Brown Brothers**.

Known for their sweet and sparkling wines, it's no surprise that this winery took out the Champion Trophy for Best Sweet White this year. Only 40 minutes north of here you'll find **De Bortoli's Rutherglen Estate**. De Bortoli's various vineyards picked up a swag of medals at this year's Wine Show. They have an amazing range of less common varietals, including Tempranillo, Durif, and Viognier, but it was their 2021 Arneis, produced at their Rutherglen location, that took home this year's International Guest Judge Annual Prize. In Rutherglen you'll also find **Morris Wines**, with their range of delicious, fortified wines. With 5 Gold medals and a Champion Trophy under their belt, you couldn't get a sweeter finish to your road trip!



Take a wine tour in ADELAIDE



Just outside of Adelaide, a trip through the **Adelaide Hills** and **McLaren Vale** is a wine lovers paradise. Together, these regions picked up no less than 28 Gold medals at this year's Wine Show, including 8 Champion Trophies! If you're a red wine lover, you absolutely cannot miss a visit to **Shingleback** or **Hardy's Tintara**. Whether it's Shiraz, Tempranillo, or a beautiful red blend, these red wines are some of the very best Australia has to offer! Not far away, **Shottesbrooke Vineyards**, **Oliver's Taranga Vineyards**, and **Gemtree Wines** also produce a beautiful red drop, so you really are spoilt for choice here!

Heading out of McLaren Vale and into the Adelaide Hills is a short drive, but the elevation of the hills makes for a much cooler climate for grapes, and you can find some beautiful whites among the wineries here. Make sure to stop in at **Artwine** to try some less common emerging varieties, like their award-winning 2022 Fiano. Why not also try **Howard's Vineyard** for a top-notch Pinot Gris, **Chain of Ponds** for their Black Thursday Sauvignon Blanc, or **Longview Vineyard** for their Macclesfield Chardonnay. The list goes on! This beautiful region of South Australia really does deliver, and if you're still thirsty for more, the Barossa Valley is just a hop, skip and a jump away!

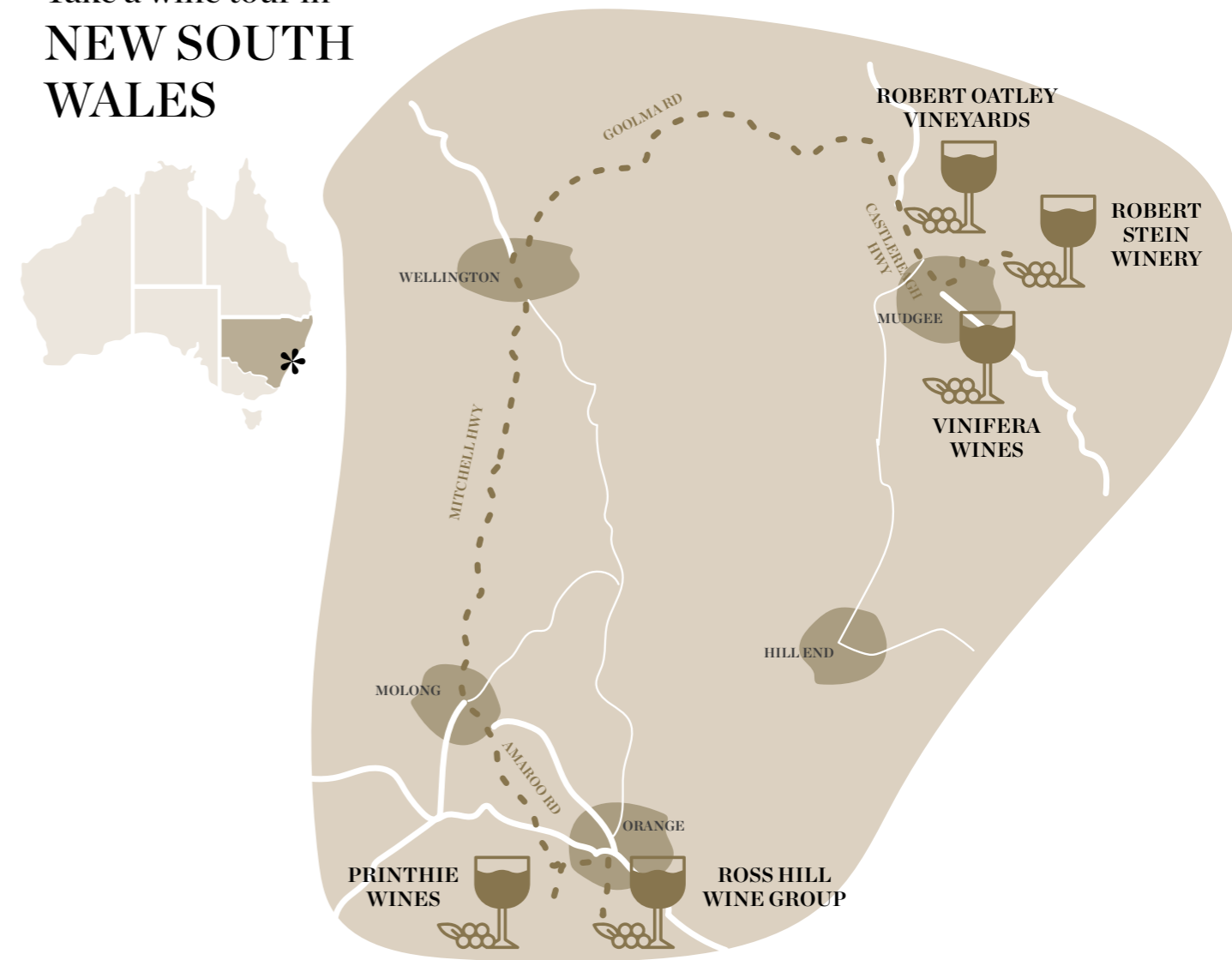


Just a few hours northwest of Sydney, **Mudgee** wine region is home to some of the oldest vineyards in Australia. It may only be small, but it is big on variety, producing a wide range of quality whites and reds. In the heart of Mudgee, you can find **Robert Stein Winery**, who picked up a collection of medals this year to add to last year's collection. They specialise in Riesling, but their Shiraz Riesling blend was top of the range this year. A trip to **Robert Oatley Vineyards** and **Vinifera Wines** are also well worth your time!

After a day or two in Mudgee, head south to **Orange**, but be sure to stop at Molong on the way to taste test some of **Printhie Wines'** beautiful sparkling

varieties. Their Swift NV Cuvee Brut took out Best Sparkling Wine at this year's Show and it sure goes down a treat! In Orange, you'll find some of the highest altitude vineyards in Australia. Less than 1% of Australian vineyards are located 600m above sea level, so at an elevation of 863m Orange is quite unique. The high elevation makes for a cooler climate, producing fresh, medium-bodied, flavour intense wines. **Ross Hill Wine Group** makes for a good option here, with their strong range of reds and whites – their 2021 Pinnacle Sauvignon Blanc being a particular stand out! With more than 40 cellar doors, you'll find no shortage of options to fill your time in Orange! ■

Take a wine tour in NEW SOUTH WALES





RECIPE

Simple chocolate fudge cake

SERVES 8 | PREPARATION 10 MINUTES | COOKING 55 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS

- 150g butter
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (165g) brown sugar
- 150g dark chocolate
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup condensed milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sour cream
- 2 eggs
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (110g) self-raising flour

To serve

- 2 tablespoons dark cocoa powder
- 2 x 125g punnets fresh raspberries
- Melted white chocolate for drizzling
- Thick cream (optional)

METHOD

Preheat oven to 170°C (150°C fan-forced). Place a 23cm (approx) round silicone dish on a baking tray. Or lightly grease a 23cm round dish and line base with baking paper.

Melt the butter in a medium saucepan and add sugar, chocolate and condensed milk. Cook over a low heat, stirring occasionally, until the mixture thickens slightly and the sugar dissolves. Remove from the heat and cool slightly.

Whisk together sour cream and eggs in a large mixing bowl. Add cooled chocolate mixture and flour and mix well.

Pour into dish and bake for 45–55 minutes or until cooked. Stand in dish for 10 minutes before turning onto a wire rack to cool.

To serve, place cake on serving plate, sieve cocoa over the top of the cake. Add the raspberries and drizzle with the melted white chocolate. Serve with thick cream if desired. ■



LOVE is the
best ingredient.



Royal Agricultural Society of NSW

