

beelgara

WINES AT BEELBANGERA



In my travels as a wine writer I often come across wines that are both unique but which lack the spotlight in wine circles but not so for the Beelgara Winery which has a history that dates back over 80 years, not to mention winning a Silver Medal at the 2010 London International Wine Show.

I am told that Italian immigrants originally built the winery in 1930 near the village of

Beelbangera in the Riverina which we all know is one of Australia's largest grape growing regions. The name Beelgara is taken from the original name 'Beelgara Vineyards' which is the proud and historical name for the vineyard sites that surround the winery even today.

Interestingly I love the philosophy of Beelgara wines: 'Relax-don't think so hard' which reveals the truly Australian attitude that wine should be an affordable, everyday luxury that can be confidently enjoyed by anyone. Even more interesting is the fact that Beelgara is now one of Australia's top twenty largest wineries offering a complete range of wines from New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria. Beelgara Estate also bottles all of its own wine.

The winemaker Rod Hooper has over 30 vintages to his name and was a graduate of Roseworthy Agricultural College. Rod also gained international winemaking experience with vintages in California, France and Germany and has worked as winemaker for Penfolds, Hardys, Goundrey and Leasingham and has also spent time judging several regional, state and national wine shows over the years.

In tasting the wines I came across the Estate Range of wines which indeed provide incredible value for money by offering quality to boot. This is achieved by selecting and marrying together hundreds of grape blocks from their growers' estates as Beelgara selects certain blocks of grapes from their growers' estates to make the Estate Range wines. Two wines worthy of note is the Estate Range Merlot and the Black Label Shiraz.

Beelgara Cellar Door

Farm 576 Rossetto Road, Beelbangera NSW

Phone: 1800 171 154

Greg Bondar
Food and Wine Editor



2009 MERLOT

This is a very generous medium bodied red with bouquets of plum and sweet French oak aromas. The palate has blackcurrant and juicy plum flavours with soft tannins together with some well integrated oak. The region is South Eastern Australia and the Alc/Vol is only 12.5%. Ideal with a plate of antipasto or some good meaty pizza.



2008 SHIRAZ

The Black Label range is a drink rich succulent red. Nestled in the Mount Lofty Ranges, the Clare Valley is renowned for producing rich, full bodied red wines, while Adelaide Hills is renowned for producing aromatic, elegant white wines. This Shiraz has a wonderfully deep red colour with generous plum aromas and a hint of licorice. A mouth filling wine with rich ripe plum fruit flavours and well-integrated oak finishing with elegant soft tannins and Alc/Vol of 13%.

Visitors are encouraged to taste the full range of Beelgara wines in the spacious cellar door which is open Monday to Saturday from 10.00 am until 5.00 pm and closed on Sunday.

A FLAIR FOR STYLISH *cuisine*

A pleasant drive to the Central Coast town of Erina Heights brings you eventually to a must visit dining spot called the Flair Restaurant. Situated on The Entrance Road, the restaurant serves modern Australian cuisine and with around 35 covers the atmosphere is cosy, intimate and very pleasant. Owner/Chef Jason Martin offers a unique dining experience for the Central Coast visitor.



Owner/Chef Jason Martin

Jason offers modern Australian food with flavours which include European, Asian as well as Latin cuisine. Jason also offers classic flavours and classic dishes by re-inventing them with a unique and modern twist. Jason of course uses fresh, local ingredients sourced where possible, from local suppliers. I was impressed with the warm hospitality and the small touches that make this restaurant not only memorable but unique from the fresh daily changing

of bread to the complimentary petit fours.

Interestingly Jason was born in Gosford and started washing dishes at a local restaurant in Erina where he stayed until he finished his HSC then going on to study hospitality. Ironically, Jason actually began his apprenticeship in the restaurant he now owns.

The menu includes wonderful dishes such as Seared Kingfish, Parsnip Puree, Braised Witlof and Oxtail Ragout. On our visit we found contemporary food in a relaxed atmosphere with the menu offering a pleasing choice of entrée ranging from Scallop ceviche, Crab Mayonnaise, Chili popcorn and Avocado to Crisp Chicken wings,

Chorizo, Quails egg and Chimmi churri. For the mains we found the 'Trio of Pork' Fillet, Belly and Black Pudding with Sauerkraut, Cauliflower and Apple a real delight whilst my partner enjoyed the Cone Bay Barramundi, sweet corn risotto, red pepper, baby artichokes and a verjuice emulsion.

Whilst I usually pass on the dessert we found the Blueberry Jelly, Lemon curd, elderflower Cream, Blueberry sorbet and lemon sponge an excellent finish to a pleasant meal although the Blue cheese Terrine with Quince Paste, Lavosh and Organic Honey, Smoked Almonds came a close second. With entrée at around \$24, mains at \$38 and desserts at \$15 the experience is worth the price. There is also a 9 course degustation at \$100 with matching wines at \$145 but please ensure that you give Jason at least 24 hours' notice.



Flair Restaurant

1/488 The Central Coast Highway, Erina Heights

Phone (02) 43 652 777

Opening Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 6.00 pm to Close

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