



ARE YOU *game?*



The range and variety of wines and wine labels on the market never ceases to amaze me and my recent discovery centres around the Plunkett Fowles Wine company which sits on a hill at the edge of the Strathbogie Ranges located 130 kilometres north of Melbourne, Victoria.

Built in 2000, the winery is state of the art and is host to five main wine brands for Plunkett Fowles.

With four fulltime winemakers and headed up by Chief Winemaker Sam Plunkett, the winery has a fully-equipped laboratory and in peak times operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week with around 20 staff. The winery has the capacity to crush 7500 tonnes of fruit each vintage. The first plantings were made in 1968.

Regionally a cool climate region in South Eastern Australia the areas produces low rainfall, cloudless skies and intense summer sun, giving rise to fruit that is dense in colour and flavour. It is from this winery that I discovered the unusual but absolutely delightful label on the 2009 Ladies who Shoot their Lunch Shiraz.

Ladies who Shoot their Lunch was developed by Matt Fowles and Sam Plunkett from the Plunkett Fowles winery. Ladies who Shoot their Lunch is their interpretation of wines that match perfectly with game.

Greg Bondar

Food and Wine Editor

FEATURED WINE

Ladies who Shoot their Lunch 2009 Shiraz

Winemakers Sam Plunkett, Victor Nash and Lindsay Brown have come up with a real winner with this wine. The vines are on typically sandy clay loam and irrigated with the majority of fruit for this wine coming from a blend of two vineyards. Using mechanical harvesting the grapes for this wine yielded 7 tonnes to the hectare and fermented in sweep-arm fermenters which tend to give stronger fruit perfume and tannins with more grip.

Using new French oak puncheons and older (mostly French) oak hogsheads and puncheons, it is interesting to note that about 1/3rd of the wine is matured in three 140 year old, 5000 litre, English oak casks. The shiraz is accentuated by a small component of co-fermented viognier.

Showing deep colour and a youthful purple at the rim, the nose is typically perfumed and very aromatic reminiscent of red fruits and pepper. The palate full bodied with good length and grainy tannins but showing great complexity with a pleasant 14.0% Alcohol/Volume. Ideal with wild Venison cellaring recommendation is anything from 2-5 years.





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FINE DINING AT ITS BEST

As a food and wine writer I consider myself very fortunate as I am not only a part-time resident of Blackheath but also a regular diner at one of the best fine dining restaurants - Sydney included - and here I refer to none other than the classy Ashcrofts.

Ashcrofts Restaurant is of course in the main street of Blackheath which boasts no fewer than six or so restaurants - some no more than a mere place to eat. With a string of awards to its name, Ashcrofts adopts the philosophy of serving the best local, regional and Australian produce in an intimate and elegant setting - a truly classy experience.

Head chef, Corinne Evatt, is not only creative but well recognised for her talented artistry of Australian and Eurasian cuisine resulting in Ashcrofts award of a chef's hat in The Sydney Morning Herald's Good Food Guide. The restaurant's decor is chic with black-and-white portraits of iconic Sydneysiders on display. Established for well over 10 years, Ashcrofts is a multi award winning restaurant offering an exceptional dining experience making it one of the Blue Mountain's finest places for dining.

Locally produced meat and poultry dishes, such as the twice-roasted crispy skin duck in Persian aromatics and the hearty prime eye fillet, lead the way on the tantalising contemporary menu offering vegetarian and coeliac friendly options and of course catering for the seafood, beef and game palate. Originally offering a BYO option Ashcrofts is now a fully licensed restaurant offering some exceptional local (Bathurst, Orange, Mudgee) and foreign wines.

Whilst Corinne manages the back of house there is the ever friendly, lovable and capable Mary Jane running the front of house and ably assisted by the young and enthusiastic waiter Talbert. Words such as friendly, attentive, dynamic, creative, professional do not go far enough to describe the qualities of Corinne and Mary Jane.

For me the lambs brains pan fried in sage butter with green apple fritters is the highlight of the entrée although the three tastes of alaskan snow scallops - for two seared rare with lime

and red pepper aioli, tartare with wakame, asian herbs and pickled ginger in pancetta jackets dressed with almond oil is outstanding. I also love the house made white bread roll with balsamic treacle and extra virgin olive oil.

As for the mains, the yoghurt baked barramundi with tarragon and walnut crust is truly superb whilst the eggplant and almond crumble baked with buffalo mozzarella and florentine fennel on hungarian sweet red pepper sauce is great vegetarian option. My last tasting of the gippsland grass fed beef tenderloin served medium rare on an oxtail glaze with gorgonzola pudding proved that quality comes from not only the produce but also the preparation and Corinne as chef knows her art.

If you can squeeze it in there is a very tempting cheese plate comprising jannei goat's milk selection with ashcrofts ginger and watermelon jam on house made crostini. Alternatively, for desert the house made profiteroles with grand marnier laced creme patissiere and dark chocolate fudge sauce is hard to pass up whilst the vanilla bean custard with spun toffee is a real treat. Tempted?

18 Govetts Leap Road Blackheath Phone 4787 8297
Wednesday to Sunday - dinner from 6.00 pm
and Sunday Lunch - from 12 midday

Greg Bondar
Food and Wine Editor

