

PIGGS HUNTING IN THE

hunter



I had the fortunate experience to taste some of the outstanding wines produced by local Hunter winemaker Steve Langham at Piggs Peake winery.

Steve took the reins in 2003 and since then it has rapidly become known as one of the wineries to watch in Australia with one notable wine

commentator regarding it as one of the 'boutiques in the Hunter' to look out for in the years ahead.

Producing a range of wines including Semillon, Marsanne, Chardonnay, Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Verdelho, Cabernet Merlot, Zinfandel, Cabernet, Tempranillo, Shiraz, and a dessert red, Steve has managed to produce high end alcoholic wines with depth of fruit, structure and complexity. Steve uses old vineyards with proven track records from regions around Australia ideally suited to the varieties selected resulting in the current range of intriguing wines.

If I had to describe the wines of Piggs Peake I would use the words 'imagination' and 'non-conformity' as the wines give the wine consumer a broad range of wines to choose from with varying levels alcohol and style. The names allocated to the wines are brilliant and appropriate and Steve will gladly tell the history of how the names were chosen. The wine names



Steve Langham

include the House of Straw Merlot, House of Sticks Shiraz, House of Bricks Shiraz, House of Sticks Cabernet Merlot, House of Bricks Cabernet, Wolfie Zinfandel, Werewolf, Bushpig, Geez Louise Shiraz, House of Straw Shiraz, House of Sticks Shiraz, House of Bricks Shiraz, House of Sticks Cabernet Merlot, House of Bricks Cabernet, Laying Geese Shiraz, and Swimming Swans Merlot.

Interestingly Steve has built up such a following that to be on his preferred mailing list you need to become one of the 'Lucky Swines' where wines are allocated pre-bottling. You also may be lucky enough to get an invitation to his

New Release Nights held in June each year where you dine on whole roasted pigs, duck sausages, grain fed rumps, king prawns and oysters while enjoying and trying the new wines. When Steve is not in the vineyards he can be found in the winery checking ferments, assessing wines in barrel, evaluating wines being matured or experimenting with new wine and oak combinations.

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www.piggspeake.com

Greg Bondar
Food and Wine Editor

WINES OF THE MONTH

2010 Suckling Pig Zinfandel

Zinfandel by its nature makes a deeper scented wine. This wine has forest floor and red fruit notes, so try it with lighter dishes like rhubarb crumble, strawberry cake. Like its Shiraz counterpart, this wine will age for several years but this will require great will power.

2010 Suckling Pig Shiraz

First made a dessert Shiraz in 2008 as a one-off wine the colour of the wine is startling. It's almost fluorescent purple. It will stain your glassware and will do horrible things to carpet and white shirts. It smells like cherry ripe, tinned pears and tastes a bit like a black forest cake. Try it with dark chocolate desserts. This wine will age, but why bother!



PUTTING THE *Zest* INTO FOOD

For anyone travelling north for a week-end break and wishing to dine out on good food with prompt and reliable service then a stop at the Zest Restaurant, nestled in the centre of Port Stephens' main dining enclave in Nelson Bay, is must stop.

Zest provides culinary delights of fresh produce which is tastefully prepared and presented for those seeking quality in their dining and, and not to mention, service.

Zest has had the honour of the prestigious "chef's hat" awarded by the respected Sydney Morning Herald Good Food Guide and it is I believe the only restaurant to hold the distinction in the Central Coast. Head chef and owner Glenn Thompson begins preparations for the evening early and is on hand to see the arrival of the Margaret River truffles.

Zest has become a regional institution over the years and Glenn believes the Good Food Guide's imprimatur has helped put Nelson Bay as a whole on the map as a dining destination. His cellar of premium labels from Australia, New Zealand, France and Italy will please the wine aficionados.

Like the many restaurants I have reviewed Zest also has an emphasis on sourcing ingredients from the region by supporting the local producers whenever possible and the use of the Port Stephens' Sydney Rock Oysters, which are second to none, is testimony to this fact.

The entrée menu features such delights as the Sautéed Garlic Snails with a Parsley Risotto & Bacon Crumb or the Duck Rillettes with Foie Gras Cigars, Port Wine Fluid Gel, Figs &

Orange Vincotto. For the mains the Salt Baked Byron Bay Pork Belly with Iceberg, Pancetta, Mint, Spiced Pear Puree or the Slow cooked Lamb with Eggplant, Zucchini Flowers, Tomatoes & Black Olive Crumble are a must to try.

The atmosphere displays intimacy and warmth and makes you feel welcome. Interestingly there are no table cloths instead preferring to use appealing wooden tables which do not detract from the feel of the restaurant at all. Open from Tuesday to Saturday from 6:30 pm it will also open Sunday and Monday by special request for group bookings.

So if you want to enjoy a great dining experience without fuss then head for this restaurant with Zest!



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