

OUTthere

INSIDE

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JADE MACRAE

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THE NORTHERN
TERRITORY

PLUS!

COUNTRY
BIZ

36-PAGE REGIONAL BUSINESS MAGAZINE INCLUDED INSIDE





MORNINGTON GLORY

Victoria's Mornington Peninsula is alive and kicking teeming with gourmets, wine lovers and golfers. **WORDS: WINSOR DOBBIN**



Seaside townships including Dromana, Sorrento, Mornington, Flinders and Merricks all have plenty of great views to offer...

Kitchen, which produces a range of gourmet goodies including pâtés, tarts and puddings.

The largely boutique wineries specialise in cool-climate varieties, particularly chardonnay and pinot noir.

Stonier, Crittenden Estate, Tuck's Ridge, Ten Minutes by Tractor, T'Gallant, Kooyong Estate, Scorpo, Paradigm Hill and Miceli all produce wines worth seeking out, while tiny and rustic Hurley Vineyard makes stellar pinots noir but visitors need to make an appointment.

Pinot and shiraz specialist Paringa Estate, Red Hill Estate (for the spectacular views and good chardonnay) and Moorooduc Estate, which has a splendid restaurant, are also worthwhile ports of call. Newer names include Kathleen Quealy's new Pobblebonk and Ragueous labels and winemaker Tod Dexter's own Dexter label.

The breezes from Port Phillip Bay and Bass Strait make the region ideal for cool-climate viticulture and recently Italian varieties and pinot gris/grigio have been grown with great success. (continued page 50) ▶

Melbourne's movers and shakers have used the Mornington Peninsula as their weekend seaside playground for generations, but over the past two decades they have been joined in their idyll by winemakers and boutique food producers.

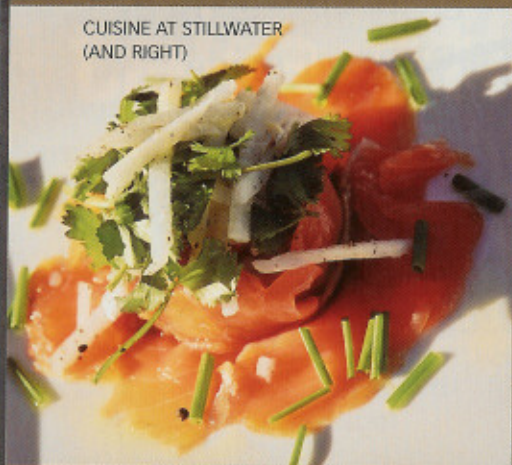
Gourmets, wine lovers and golfers followed in their wake and the peninsula is alive with terrific places to eat and drink, while also boasting several of the nation's top golf courses.

There are now more than 50 cellar doors and 200 grape growers in a region that was home to just 20 growers in the 1980s.

Just over an hour south of the Victorian capital, the peninsula is a delightful region in which to spend a few days. Boot-shaped, it lends itself to leisurely exploration, perhaps from coast to coast, meandering through rolling countryside dotted with vines and olive groves.

Seaside townships including Dromana, Sorrento, Mornington, Flinders and Merricks all have plenty of great views to offer, while the hamlet of Red Hill is particularly well endowed with destinations for foodies, including Red Hill Cheese (which produces both goat and cow cheeses), the boutique Red Hill Brewery (try the Golden Ale) and the Red Hill

CUISINE AT STILLWATER
(AND RIGHT)



PENINSULA HOT
SPRINGS RETREAT



Stillwater at Crittenden, the new and exciting Tractor Wine Bar and Restaurant, Jill's at Moorooduc Estate, Max's at Red Hill Estate, Tuck's Ridge Cafe, Salix at Willow Creek and Montalto are all winery restaurants that have garnered praise...

Dromana Estate, where you can also sample the 'i' range and Mornington Estate wines, is a good spot to enjoy a complete food, wine and boutique beer experience. There's a casual restaurant from Wednesdays to Sundays and a beer garden at weekends.

Long-time favourite Stonier produces excellent chardonnays and pinots and you can enjoy a regional cheese platter at the leafy cellar door.

Garry and Margaret Crittenden, who recently opened three luxurious over-water villas on the Crittenden Estate property, underline local determination to show off the best of the region. In addition to wines under the Crittenden, Geppetto and Pinocchio labels, the Crittendens also produce their own olive oils, olive products, dukkahs, jams, chutneys, vincettos and verjus – all of which are available at their cellar door.

Stillwater at Crittenden, the new and exciting Tractor Wine Bar and Restaurant, Jill's



WINEMAKER ROLLO CRITTENDEN
AT CRITTENDEN ESTATE

STILLWATER RESTAURANT



6 OF THE BEST



at Moorooduc Estate, Max's at Red Hill Estate, Tuck's Ridge Cafe, Salix at Willow Creek and Montalto are all winery restaurants that have garnered praise, while the pizzas at T'Gallant are also hugely popular.

Other restaurants recommended by locals include the Long Table, The Lighthouse Café, Afghan Marco Polo, Loquat, La Petanque and Pizza D'oh. The Brass Razu wine bar and The Rocks at Mornington are two other funky hangouts.

The Tasting Station at Rosebud is an ideal spot at which to pick up a range of local gourmet items, perhaps for a picnic.

If all the food and wine becomes a little too much, try a walk along the gloriously unspoiled Merricks Beach (with views to Phillip Island), or visit the delightful Peninsula Hot Springs retreat, where you can bathe in mineral spring water and enjoy massage or beauty treatments.

PENINSULA HOT SPRINGS RETREAT



HURLEY VINEYARD

2005 Homage Pinot Noir

Victorian Supreme Court judge Kevin Bell and his partner, lawyer Tricia Byrnes, produce a range of outstanding pinots noir from their tiny winery at Bannarring. This is a superbly Burgundian wine with clean varietal fruit flavours and subtle oak character. Drinking beautifully right now, it will also cellar well for several years. A ripper! Best with roast duck. \$38.

FOXKEYS HANGOUT

2006 Chardonnay

The Mornington Peninsula is home to dozens of small producers cranking out great chardonnays and pinots noir. Here's a terrific example; a beautifully balanced chardonnay that is ridiculously easy to drink. Barrel-fermented, but not over the top, it is complex with some lovely savoury tones. A very versatile food wine. Try it with braised mushrooms. \$27.



CRITTENDEN ESTATE

2007 Pinot Grigio

Garry Crittenden was one of the pioneers of Italian varietals in Australia, planting several different varieties, many of which have flourished. His pinot grigio is ripe and succulent but also very stylish and drinkable. It's a terrific drink with or without food with its big flavours matched by nice crisp acidity on the finish. Sample it with veal parmigiana. \$30.

DROMANA ESTATE

2006 'i' Arneis

Arneis is an Italian grape variety that translates from the local dialect as "little rascal" because of its capricious nature. It has proved very well suited to Australia, however, with this a particularly fine example; aromatic and savoury with crispness and dryness on a very interesting palate, where grapefruit and flint characters dominate. A wine for enjoying well chilled over the next 12 months. Try it with seafood risotto. \$20.



MICELI

2006 Dry Pinot Rosé

I recently tasted 15 top Australian rosés with a colleague and this was our favourite by a considerable margin. It's made from pinot noir grapes, which were crushed and left on skins overnight before pressing and a small portion was fermented in French oak. Cherry red in colour with bright, vivacious flavours on the palate, lovely textures and a bone-dry finish with some lovely crisp acidity. A good partner for a Spanish omelette. \$22.

T'GALLANT

2005 Juliet Pinot Noir

A lot of wine drinkers prefer a light red that they can drink lightly chilled on a warm summer's day and this would be the perfect choice if you are looking for something that's soft and deliciously drinkable. There are some lovely cherry aromas, with nice soft fruit flavours and it finishes medium-dry with some deliciously velvety characters on the palate. Try it with gourmet sausages. \$15.



TRAVELtips

TONY LEE IN THE KITCHEN AT FOXEYS HANGOUT

GETTING THERE:

Regional Express (Rex) flies to Melbourne from several regional centres in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria.

WHERE TO STAY:

Garry and Margaret Crittenden recently opened three gorgeous over-water villas at their Crittenden Estate vineyard. The rooms at **Lakeside Villas** at Dromana are spacious and extremely well equipped. There's a warm, welcoming feel and all the ingredients for a hearty breakfast are provided (including farm sausages). There are superb lake and vineyard views, high-quality fittings, and the Stillwater cellar door restaurant is just a short stroll away. From \$250 per night at weekends and \$220 midweek. (03) 5981 0714. www.lakesidevillas.com.au

Peppers Moonah Links Resort is a stylish golf resort that boasts two championship courses; the Legends and the Open, and hosted the Australian Open championship in 2003 and 2005. The resort has 96 rooms, most overlooking one of the two courses, and an Endota spa. It's also just down the road from the Peninsula Hot Springs. There's a good restaurant on site and the wine list features many local products. A range of packages is available. (03) 5988 2000 www.peppers.com.au/Moonah

An award-winning country house hotel, **Lindenderry at Red Hill** is set in secluded grounds with both gardens and vines, and boasts 40 rooms that have been described as "luxurious without being ostentatious". The Linden Tree restaurant is open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner and highlights local produce and wines. There is a spa on the premises. (03) 5989 2933 www.lindenderry.com.au

WHERE TO EAT:

Stillwater at Crittenden. Zac Poullier (once the personal chef for Russell Crowe) and his wife Jacqui are doing a superb job at this foodie haunt, which is particularly popular in the summer months when crowds spill out into the gardens overlooking the vineyards and lake. This is a serious lunch experience; two courses cost \$48, three, \$65. The crispy fried soft-shell crab with roast corn salsa, lime aioli and chilli salt is outstanding, while the 120-day grain-fed Angus eye fillet with red wine jus is a perennial favourite. (03) 5981 9555. www.stillwateratcrittenden.com.au

Foxeys Hangout is perfect for laid-back wine lovers. Foxeys Hangout not only offers stellar views and excellent wines, owner and winemaker Tony Lee also gets behind the stoves to serve up superb tasting plates

(\$10 each) at weekends and on public holidays. He cooks casual dishes like grilled mushrooms in vine leaves and barbecued quail. Cheeses and espresso coffees are available to complement tastings of the winery's dessert wines. Make sure you also get to taste the superb 2005 Reserve Pinot Noir. (03) 5989 2022 www.foxeys-hangout.com.au

The Flinders Hotel refers to itself as "the Mornington Peninsula's best secret" but the secret is out. The dining room and bistro serve outstanding food that's unlike the fare you'll find at most pubs. Think dishes like prawn cutlets stuffed with chicken and herb mousse and wrapped in wonton skins (\$16), or splendidly rich duck, rabbit, pork and pistachio sausages served with a compote of cider-braised apples (\$26.90). There's also an impressive wine list. (03) 5989 0201 www.flindershotel.com.au

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Mornington Peninsula Tourism,
(03) 5987 3078 or 1800 804 009,
www.visitmorningtonpeninsula.org

Mornington Peninsula Vignerons Association,
(03) 5989 2377, www.mpva.com.au ■