



## The Newsletter of the Metropolitan Wine and Food Society of Sydney Inc.

*Published for the information of the members and friends of the Metropolitan Wine and Food Society of Sydney Inc.*

**Vol 12 No 3—December 2025**



*Fueled by wine and*  
**Christmas**



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Metropolitan Wine and Food Society of Sydney Inc  
Registered No. Y13780.23  
Founded: 22 July 1977

Website: <http://mwfss.com/> Facebook: Metropolitan Wine and Food Society of Sydney Inc.

## Society Program Functions and Meetings

### Dates for your Diary 2025

Date	Event
<b>Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2026</b>	Lunch Soya Restaurant Balmain
<b>Weekend 27<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup> March 2026</b>	FWFSA Victor Gibson Commemorative Dinner & Weekend
<b>Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2026</b>	Lunch Strangers Restaurant NSW Parliament House

### Office Bearers and Committee

**2024—2025**

President and FWFSA Councilor:

**Murray Mills**

Vice President Wine Master:

**Peter Bacon**

Vice President Food Master: **Jim Rolls**

Secretary: **David Yeomans**

Treasurer: **Carole Yeomans**

Committee Member Wine: **Bruce Pollard**

Committee Member Food: **Carolyn Smalls**

Wine Scribe: **Alan Broom**

Food Scribe: **Kerrie Sims**

Cellar Master: **Trevor Gibson**

Federation of Wine and Food Societies of

Australia Councilor: **Trevor Gibson**

### A note from the Editor

As you can see from the Diary Dates; another busy year is being planned for the society.

We are revisiting the popular Soya restaurant in Balmain and Strangers Restaurant at Nsw  
Parliament Houe

Remember, that if you have a personal dining or wine event, we appreciate a note of your  
story for inclusion in our newsletter.

Kerrie Sims



**The Federation of Wine & Food Societies of Australia  
Victor Gibson Commemorative Dinner & Weekend  
27<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

**Victor Gibson Commemorative Dinner and Weekend 2026**

This year the Federation Weekend will be held in Adelaide, Friday 27 - Sunday 29 March, with an option for a Wine Tour on Monday 30 March.

The South Australian Wine and Food Society has put together a good range of events. The registrations close on 25 February, if you are still thinking about it.

There has been a great response overall, and the response from the members of the Metropolitan has been terrific - so we should have a great weekend.

After the closing date I will contact all of our Society members who have registered, so we know who is going, when we're arriving and where we are staying, so we can make plans together if we wish.

If you need any more information, at this stage, please let me know.

**Peggy Sanders (0413 481 854)**

**Federation of Wine and Food Societies of Australia (FWFSA)**

The Federation annually elects its office bearers and committee during the Federation Weekend, at the AGM on the Sunday; the Metropolitan Wine and Food Society of Sydney and other Societies across Australia are members of the Federation. If you would like to serve on the Federation Committee, or would like to know more about the Federation, please have a talk to your FWFSA Councillor, Trevor Gibson (0427 311 456) or FWFSA Secretary, Peggy Sanders (0413 481 854).

You can check the programme and register using the included forms.

## Victor Gibson Commemorative Dinner & Weekend

Friday 27 March	Saturday 28 March	Sunday 29 March	Monday 30 March
	<p><b>11:00 am</b>  <b>Wine Tasting</b>                      Chardonnay Wine Tasting at the National Wine Centre.</p>	<p><b>10:30 am</b>  <b>Annual General Meeting</b>                      Crowne Plaza Hotel.</p>	<p><b>Winery Tours</b>                      The full day bus tours feature 3 wineries and include lunch. Please indicate if you are interested in either,</p>
<p><b>2:30 - 3:30 pm</b>  <b>Governor's Reception</b>                      The Governor of South Australia, Frances Adamson AC will welcome members of the FWFSA to South Australia. After official introductions, drinks and canapés will be served in the historic ballroom at Government House.</p>	<p><b>12:00 - 2:00 pm Lunch</b>                      National Wine Centre Stay and enjoy a 2 course menu, entrée and main with matched wine.</p>	<p><b>12:00 Lunch</b>                      Lunch will be held at Kooyonga Golf Club, a favourite venue of SAWFS. Kooyonga provides a spectacular setting and superb cuisine.</p>	<p><b>Tour A</b>                      Adelaide Hills OR  <b>Tour B</b>                      Barossa Valley</p>
<p><b>5:00 - 6:00 pm</b>  <b>Convention Registration</b></p> <p><b>6:30 - 8:30 pm</b>  <b>Welcome Function</b>                      Luna10 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel has a wonderful view over the Botanic Gardens and the Adelaide hills. Join us to sample fine wines with a light meal.</p>	<p><b>7:00 pm</b>  <b>Victor Gibson Commemorative Dinner</b>                      at 165 North Terrace Adelaide. The signature event will feature dinner with paired wines, including those from the Federation Cellar.</p>		<p><b>Explore Adelaide</b>                      according to your interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adelaide Oval</li> <li>• Haigh's Chocolates tour</li> <li>• Botanic Gardens</li> <li>• Central Market</li> <li>• Shopping - Rundle Mall, Adelaide Arcade, Jetty Road Glenelg</li> <li>• David Roche Gallery</li> <li>• St Peter's Cathedral</li> <li>• Art Gallery of SA</li> <li>• Jam Factory Gallery</li> <li>• Old Treasury &amp; Tunnels tour</li> </ul> <p><b>Visitor Guides</b>                      can be downloaded:  <a href="http://experienceadelaide.com.au">experienceadelaide.com.au</a></p>

### Travel

Adelaide is serviced by direct flights from all major Australian cities. The airport is a short drive from the city centre.

### Accommodation

A full range of options are available.

Our recommendation is the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 27 Frome Street Adelaide, which is centrally located and convenient for all functions.

**Expression of Interest:** To assist with planning, please indicate your interest in attending the event (in whole or part) by 4 August 2025. See options on the next page. We will forward the final program, costs and registration form, in September.

Organising Committee



admin@sawfs.org.au



## VICTOR GIBSON

# COMMEMORATIVE DINNER & WEEKEND

Adelaide 27-29 March 2026

## EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

To assist the planning committee, please return this form by **Monday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2025**. Registration details will be available in September to those who have expressed interest, or they will be distributed by your Society.

**Please complete the Online Form** <https://sawfs.org.au/eoi>  
**Or save and email this form to** [admin@sawfs.org.au](mailto:admin@sawfs.org.au)

**I am proposing to attend the 2026 FWFS Victor Gibson Weekend in Adelaide**

Name	
Mobile Number	
Email Address	
Name of Society Membership/s	

**Also proposing to attend the 2026 FWFS Victor Gibson Weekend in Adelaide is**

Name	
Mobile Number	
Email Address	
Name of Society Membership/s	

**\*\*If you will be attending as a guest of a member, please state their name and Society. Please indicate the functions you may wish to attend:**

**The Federation of Wine & Food Societies of Australia  
Victor Gibson Commemorative Dinner & Weekend  
27<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup> March 2026  
Expression of Interest**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>FUNCTION</b>	<b>NUMBER of ATTENDEES</b>
Friday 27 March	The Governor's Reception at Government House	
Friday 27 March	Welcome Function at Luna10, Crowne Plaza Drinks and canapés	
Saturday 28 March	Chardonnay Wine Tasting - National Wine Centre	
Saturday 28 March	Lunch - National Wine Centre	
Saturday 28 March	Victor Gibson Commemorative Dinner	
Sunday 29 March	Annual General Meeting	
Sunday 29 March	Lunch – Kooyonga Golf Club	
Monday 30 March	Winery Tour: Option A or B (please state your preference)	

**Spring Luncheon**  
**Sunday 21st September 2025**  
**At the Home of Corinne & Murray Mills**



This year the Spring Luncheon was held at the home of Corinne and Murray Mills in Castle Hill. Guests enjoyed Champagne and Canapes in a pleasant atmosphere on the spacious patio overlooking an inviting pool.

**Canapes on arrival**



*Salmon,*

Two types of salmon appetizers  
silky, rich smoked salmon and  
poached fresh salmon both with flying fish  
roe and served on crostini. The smoked  
salmon garnished with dill and the fresh  
salmon with seaweed strands.

## Spring Luncheon

### *Tempura Prawns*



Sweet, juicy and tender prawns coated in an ultra-light batter, quickly deep-fried to become golden and crispy. Served with a creamy tomato-based seafood dipping sauce

### *Stuffed Pani Purri*

A popular Indian street food. A crispy fried dough stuffed with a curried potato mixture



### NV Haton Blanc de Blanc

A Blanc de Blanc NV Champagne from Champagne Haton was chosen to accompany the three choices of Canapes. The wine met all our expectations and complemented the three different tastes offered by the canapes.

Champagne Haton is a family-owned grower-producer based in the Vallée de la Marne in the Champagne District of France. A small producer known for crafting elegant and expressive Champagnes from primarily Pinot Meunier and Pinot Noir they also produce a Blanc de Blanc style exclusively from Chardonnay. With roots dating back to the 1920s, the Haton family emphasizes traditional methods, meticulous vineyard care, and long aging on lees to achieve depth and finesse in their wines.



**Tasting** The expectation, as described by Champagne Haton, was for a crisp, elegant Champagne with citrus zest, apple, and floral tones, lifted by a fine mousse. Mineral-driven palate with refreshing acidity. Huon Hooke also noted the wine was youthful and shy with a nose that is not very well formed, with a lovely palate and an excellent example of what the small producers of France can produce.

**Age Influence:** Since Huon Hooke first tasted the wine, it has aged well in our cellar. Best consumed within 2–4 years of disgorgement for freshness; extended cellaring does add brioche and honey flavours. Tyson Stelzer, *The Champagne Guide 2020–2021* notes Blanc de Blancs styles 'develop nutty, toasty richness with time, but lose primary vibrancy.', something members noted.

## Spring Luncheon



### Main

#### *Coq au Vin, Soft Polenta, Dutch Carrots, Spicy Cabbage*

Chicken pieces seasoned and marinated overnight in red wine, bay leaves and thyme. Then sauteed along with bacon, onions and mushrooms. The pan deglazed with brandy and reduced. The sauteed ingredients were slow cooked in the sauce.

Tender chicken in a richly flavoured sauce was enhanced with complimentary tastes of mushroom, onion and bacon. The neutral flavoured soft polenta is a perfect accompaniment as it absorbs the lushness of the stew. The tang of spicy red cabbage was a delightful

contrasting taste. Orange carrots and green parsley added crunch and colour to a superb meal.

Three wines were chosen to accompany our main course, two Pinot Noir and a Chardonnay.

### 2013 Yarraloch Stephanie's Dream Pinot Noir

Yarraloch Wines, an acclaimed boutique producer in Victoria's Yarra Valley, focuses on cool-climate varieties such as Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Sauvignon Blanc. Established with an emphasis on low-yield vineyard practices and precise winemaking, Yarraloch aims to express the region's unique terroir through wines of clarity, structure, and elegance.

Tasting: Bright cherry, raspberry, and spice with silky tannins. Earthy undertones add complexity.

<https://www.yarraloch.com.au>

Age Influence: Now showing softened fruit with savoury, gamey notes typical of aged Yarra Pinot. Halliday Wine Companion reviews highlight Yarra Valley Pinot as 'age-worthy for a decade or more, gaining forest floor and game complexity.'



## Spring Luncheon

### 2004 Matahiwi Pinot Noir

Matahiwi Estate, located in New Zealand's Wairarapa region, is recognized for producing high-quality, sustainably crafted wines that highlight the region's cool-climate strengths. Best known for its vibrant Pinot Noir and expressive Sauvignon Blanc, the estate combines careful vineyard management with innovative winemaking techniques.

**Tasting:** Matured gracefully into dried cherry, leather, and earthy forest floor tones. Smooth texture with softened tannins. <https://www.matahiwi.co.nz>

**Age Influence:** Two decades on, fruit is subtle; savoury tertiary flavours dominate. Wine is at peak maturity. NZ Winegrowers report notes that Martinborough/Wairarapa Pinot can cellar '15–20 years, developing mushroom and earthy nuances.'

Some members thought the Matahiwi had passed it, while others found the opposite, claiming it to be the wine of the day. As this was predominately from the one table, the thought was the difference in opinion could be due to bottle variation.



### 2015 De Sallis Chardonnay

De Sallis Wines are a small, innovative winery on the slopes of Mount Canobolas near Orange, New South Wales. Working at high altitude, the winery benefits from a cool climate that encourages slow ripening and intense flavor development. De Sallis is known for its experimental approach, resulting in distinctive, textural wines. While the Chardonnay chosen is their entry level wine, with their premium offerings over \$300 a bottle it did not disappoint our Chardonnay drinkers.

**Tasting:** Citrus and stone fruit with hints of almond and flint. The high altitude delivers crisp acidity while barrel work adds texture and a nutty depth.

**Age Influence:** De Sallis Chardonnays have the potential to age 8 to 10 years particularly with their premium wines at 8 years, the fresh fruit have evolved toward baked apple, nutty complexity, and honeyed tones. [www.desalliswines.com.au](http://www.desalliswines.com.au)



## Spring Luncheon



### Dessert

#### *Coffee Panna Cotta with Crostini Biscuits*

A traditional Italian dessert made from simple ingredients – cream, sugar and gelatin. The heated mixture is poured into a mould and allowed to set. Flavoured with coffee; this produced a luscious, creamy, soft dessert which contrasted well with the crunchy biscuit

### 2018 Fritz Haag Auslese

Weingut Fritz Haag is a historic, prestigious estate in Germany's Mosel valley, renowned for producing Riesling of exceptional clarity, finesse, and longevity. With vineyards centered around the iconic Brauneberg hill, the winery excels in crafting wines that reflect the steep slate soils and cool riverine climate of the region.

**Tasting:** Apricot, honey, and candied citrus balanced with racy acidity. Sweet yet precise and fresh. <https://www.fritz-haag.de>

**Age Influence:** Over decades, gains petrol, dried fruit, caramel, and nutty complexity; still vibrant thanks to high acidity. Jancis Robinson MW writes that Mosel Auslese 'ages magnificently for half a century or more, developing smoky, honeyed, and nutty dimensions.'

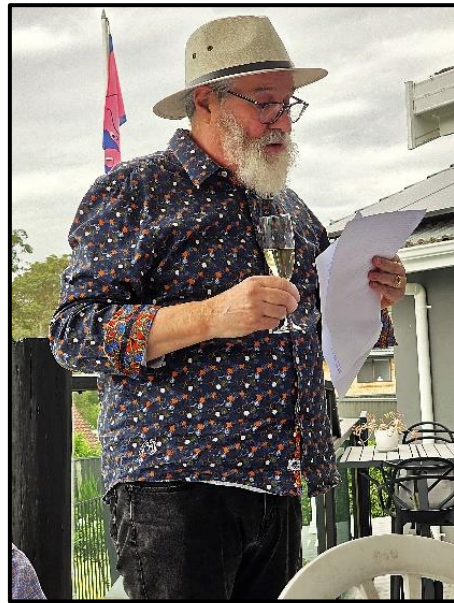


### After Taste

A very successful selection of wines enjoyed by all members, unfortunately Chardonnay is still a challenge for many. The Haton Blanc de Blanc was an easy drinking champagne, a style that always sets the mood for our functions. It also showed the power of the smaller producer, loads of character avoiding mass produced house style.

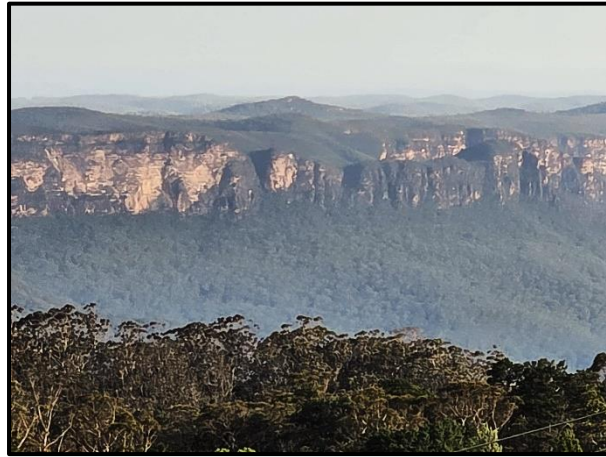
The Fritz Haag Auslese, made a welcome return and refreshed our palates with the joy of aged Riesling, a style almost unknown in Australia. The Austrians, Germans and French around Alsace make beautiful wines sweet wines with excellent balance of acid. As mentioned previously the Auslese designation defines the level of ripeness and hence sugar in the grapes at harvest. The classification by ripeness starts at Kabinett, then Spätlese, Auslese, Beerenauslese, Eiswein and finally Trockenbeerenauslese.

# Spring Luncheon



**Christmas Luncheon**  
**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2025**  
**Jamieson Restaurant, Heritage Hotel Katoomba**

The Christmas Luncheon was held at Jamieson Restaurant in the Heritage Hotel at Katoomba giving members a new restaurant experience and an opportunity for a weekend or night away. The hotel, perched on the edge of a ridge, 300 metres from the heart of Katoomba's town centre, offers panoramic views of the World Heritage Blue Mountains.



The hotel exudes old world charm, with spacious rooms and a grand staircase. Comfortable lounges enabled guests to relax with drinks from the bar and to mingle with other guests. The kitchen provided meals, perfect for those who decided to dine-in on Friday night. A grand piano playing soft music in the bar area completed the congenial atmosphere



## Christmas Luncheon

### *Canapes on arrival*



#### **Sugar Cured Salmon**

Sugar-cured salmon, glossy and tender on cucumber, creates a beautiful balance of freshness and richness. The citrus-wedge brings a gentle tang and the crème fraîche a touch of creamy elegance. A delightful canapé that is sweet, salty, creamy, crisp, and fragrant all in one bite. The sorrel green leafed garnish completes an attractive colour combination of pink, yellow and green.

#### **Beef Carpaccio**

A slender spear of asparagus, blanched just long enough to keep its snap and bright green colour, enveloped in a ribbon of beef carpaccio. The grassy freshness of the vegetable balancing the savoury, silky meat. A stellar pairing with wonderful colour combination.



#### **Chicken Leek Truffle Pastry**

A golden flaky, melt-in-your-mouth pastry packed with juicy chicken, soft sweet leeks and a hint of truffle that adds a gorgeous depth of flavour. It's comforting, indulgent and wonderfully aromatic. Garnished with sesame and poppy seeds

#### **Lamb Skewer**

Tender Juicy cubes of lamb threaded along a wooden skewer. A bright scatter of finely chopped herbs, parsley and mint, clings to the meat, and mingles with its flavour. Moistened with a delicious dipping sauce



## Christmas Luncheon

### **NV Colin Castille Brut Blanc de Blanc**

A Blanc de Blanc NV Champagne from the House of Colin- Castille was chosen to accompany the four Canapes. This style of wine is always an excellent choice for the varied flavours of canapes due to its high acidity, zesty citrus notes, and fine bubbles that cleanse the palate. Tasting The Colin Castille was different from many French styles lacking any yeasty complexity that is typical of French champagne, however common to Blanc de Blanc styles. A very refreshing champagne with fresh acid and aromas of white blossom, yellow fruits and pear, with touches of bergamot and subtle exotic notes.



### **Entree**



### **Prawn and Porcini Mushroom Ravioli**

The contrast which made it special was the natural sweetness and tenderness of the prawns paired with the rich, umami depth of porcini. Attractively presented with sauce and sorrel garnish. However, we found the pasta to be undercooked, and this spoiled the overall enjoyment of the dish

### **2022 Shaw + Smith M3 Chardonnay**

A Shaw +Smith M3 Chardonnay from the Adelaide Hills accompanied our Entrée. A cool climate chardonnay such as the Shaw+Smith was an excellent choice to accompany the umami rich flavours of porcini infused dishes and is an excellent alternative to the more usual choice of a red wine style such as Nebbiolo. Tasting The M3 is a refined, contemporary cool-climate Chardonnay with aromas of white flowers, nectarine and ginger and a palate of stone-fruit and citrus backed by subtle creaminess from oak and lees.



# Christmas Luncheon

## *Plat Principal*



### **Duck Confit, Puy lentil ragout, kale, asparagus, carrots and port wine jus**

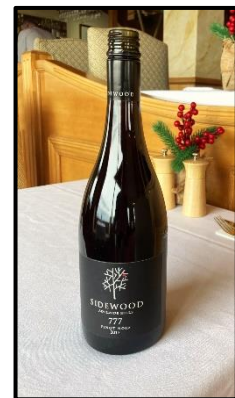
These ingredients came together as a deeply comforting yet elegant dish, each element playing a distinct role in both flavour and texture. The duck was slow-cooked until the meat turned silky and tender. The crisp skin gives that irresistible contrast between crackling exterior and melt-in-the-mouth meat. Puy lentils hold their shape beautifully, so the ragout feels hearty rather than mushy. They bring an earthy, slightly peppery flavour that balances the richness of the duck. Lightly wilted or

sautéed, kale adds a pleasant bitterness, and a robust texture. Asparagus introduces a bright, green snap. Its freshness lifts the dish. Carrots bring warmth and a gentle sweetness. The port wine jus ties everything together. Reduced until glossy and concentrated, it delivers a luxurious sweetness with hints of berry, spice, and oak.

Two Pinot Noir accompanied our main course; one from the Old World, a Domaine Lucien Jacob Savigny-Les-Beaune and the other from the New World; a Sidewood 777 Pinot Noir.

### **2017 Sidewood 777 Pinot Noir**

Tasting Due to its lighter colour, members were surprised by the quality of the Sidewood Pinot Noir expecting an inferior wine. While very light in colour compared to Savigny-les-Beaune, beautifully fragrant and fruity, with high acidity. It didn't have the complexity of the Old World however was beautiful to drink and an excellent match with our duck course. The palate was delicate but flavoursome, showing red berries, gentle spice and undergrowth with good acidity and a slowly unfolding finish.



### **2018 Domaine Lucien Jacob Savigny-lès-Beaune**

Tasting The Savigny-lès-Beaune was a more complex structural wine earthy and more robust on the palate bright red-cherry and raspberry fruit, medium body, fresh but not aggressive acidity, and a mix of earth, light forest-floor, spice and a fine mineral backbone.

## Christmas Luncheon

### *Interlude*

As a special Christmas treat between courses we shared in that great Australian Christmas experience; a Sparkling Shiraz. The Peter Lehmann Black Queen is one of the better value examples of this style and offered a pleasant interlude between the duck and dessert.

#### **2020 Peter Lehmann Black Queen Sparkling Shiraz**

Tasting A deep crimson sparkling red with lifted aromas of dark fruits, chocolate and vanilla, and hints of Christmas cake spice. The palate was generous and mouth-filling, showing blackberry and plum fruit, jammy dark berries, dark chocolate and perfumed oak, along with a fine bead of bubbles and silky, supple tannins. The finish was long and rich, balancing sweet dark fruit, spice and savoury chocolate.



### *Dessert*



#### **Rhubarb Shortcake and Vanilla Cream**

Presented as a rhubarb mousse with a good balance of tartness and sweetness. This was topped with rich crumbly biscuit shortbread and between the layers lay a light and silky vanilla cream. A perfect finish to a lovely meal

#### **2023 Stockman's Ridge Sweet Range Grüner Veltliner**

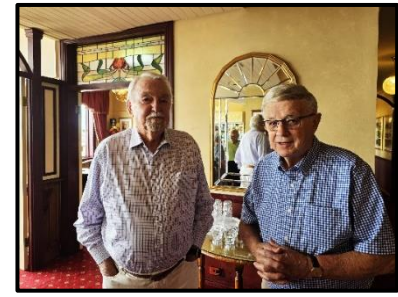
Stockman's Ridge is one of the few vineyards in Australia working with the Austrian Gruner-Veltliner grape

Tasting A very light dessert style wine with aromas of peach, nectarine and honey, with bright, crunchy acidity and a distinct mineral finish. There was also subtle citrus lift and light herbal or white-pepper spice, reflecting both the variety and the cool, elevated terroir of Orange.



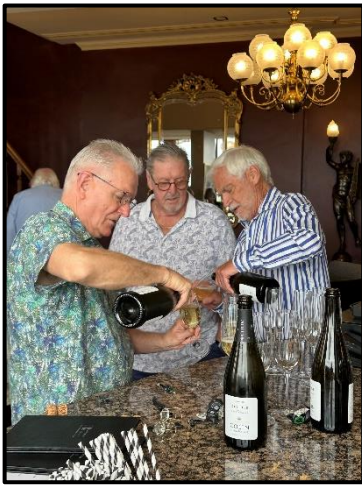
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## Christmas Luncheon - Guests



Guests Mingle in the bar before lunch

## Christmas Luncheon - Guests



**Member's Contribution**  
**Review of Tempus Restaurant, Katoomba**  
**Bruce Pollard**

What a great weekend we had in Katoomba! The staff at the Mountain Heritage Hotel were so helpfully attentive and cheerful. Our accommodation was a superb suite in "the turret."



Of course, the main highlight of the weekend was the MWFSS Christmas lunch on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December. We invited wine and food loving friends who live at Glenbrook, and Alan and Jacki thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Another highlight for us was our Saturday evening dinner at **Tempus Restaurant** at 66 Katoomba Street, across the road from the entrance to the Carrington.

For our first course we chose sourdough with whipped saltbush butter, and two shared plates: John Dory crudo; and wild rabbit & duck Manti. For the main, we each chose a snapper fillet, which was served on a substantial fennel and orange salad, meaning that the salad of seasonal leaves with sumac dressing which we also ordered was somewhat superfluous.

We washed this down with a bottle of Matthew Atallah *Block a2 Chardonnay* from Orange. It was a delicious example of the ever-improving Chardonnays from this wonderful cool climate wine region. Matthew's story is very interesting (see <https://atallahwines.com.au/pages/matthews-story>).



## Review of Tempus Restaurant, Katoomba

When the Chardonnay ran out, we took the advice of the very knowledgeable sommelier (ex-Felix in Angel Place), and we each had a glass of *Nuovo di Renzo* by Renzaglia Wines, a family winery to the south-east of Bathurst. This light red went well with the snapper. The Renzaglia web-site informs me that the *Nuovo di Renzo* is a blend of Sangiovese from First Ridge Wines in Mudgee, Graciano and Merlot from Freeman Vineyards at Kingsvale (near Young), and Shiraz and Cabernet from Winooka Park, Gemalla (also south-east of Bathurst). The result of all of this was a wine somewhat reminiscent of a Beaujolais Villages.

We felt sated by now. So we decided to skip dessert and walk back down the hill to the Mountain Heritage to catch the end of the day's play in the ashes test match.

Our meal at Tempus was excellent, and I'd highly recommend this restaurant to you when you next visit Katoomba.

## Photos of Mr Collins Leura

Trish and Paul Riley dined at Mr Collins Restaurant at Leura on Friday night and contributed photos from their experience



## Member's Contribution

### Central Otago ... *Burgundy of the South*

#### Graham & Christine Turner



The Turners recently vacationed in the Central Otago region of South Island, New Zealand. Flying in and out of the stunning setting of Queenstown, we were treated to spectacular clear (unheard of for the Land of the Long White Cloud) views of the Alps, dotted with glaciers, ice caps and dustings of snow. We collected our rental and headed to our accommodations in Alexandra (about 80mins) for 2 weeks and then onto Cromwell for another 2 weeks.

Our cottage in Alexandra had glorious front row views down the Clutha River Gorge. Based here, we undertook some famous cycle trails including the multi-day Central Otago Rail Trail towards Dunedin, the challenging Roxburgh Gorge which included jetboat portages between unfinished trail portions and the multi-day Clutha Gold Trail. The trails snake their way through magnificent scenery festooned with Scottish broom and wild thyme, the passing aromas delighting the nose as one treads along. The entire area oozes in relict gold diggings and abandoned paraphernalia like aqueducts, dredges, sluicings and shanty dwellings crudely fashioned from the ubiquitous schist geology. Gold strikes ensued hot on the heels of the Australian rushes in Victoria and NSW, so much so, that many place names mimic those from the Australian boom. The Clutha Gold Trail is not dissimilar to the Klondike Trail in Alaska, where hopeful prospectors tramped over many days from Dunedin over the highlands. Fortunately for modern day hikers and bikers, the trail has been improved substantially.



## Central Otago ... *Burgundy of the South*

The trails around Alexandra (and Cromwell) have wineries strategically positioned as welcome rest stops, and the bike rental companies provide bike bags and luggage racks suited to accommodating wine bottles. All the cellar doors charge a tasting fee (some redeemable on purchase), but the wines are generally available in the local supermarkets with dedicated "local Otago" wines sections.

One of the wineries we visited on the Otago Rail Trail near Clyde was Monte Christo. It has an incredible history having been first established in 1864 by a Frenchman named Feraud who had come seeking gold. He was unsuccessful with his quest. He became an alchemist, as what was a Frenchman to do on the other side of the globe but to turn viticulture into gold. The current winery holds one of the Pinot Noir's we tasted on the trip, a 2022 vintage. In fact, 2022 seems to have been a bumper year for this varietal. Almost universally, the pinots in the region are cellared for a maximum of 10-12 months, sometimes as



short as 6 months or only a portion may be oaked and then blended back. This practice has a lot to do with the cellar management rather than oenological principles, but the result is that Otago pinots tend to have less tannins (skin and stem contact constrained) and oak notes are subtle with a predominance of rich cherry and berry flavours and bouquet. The practice also means that it is difficult to find earlier vintages beyond the current release and maybe a year or two previous.

A few drizzly days scattered throughout our stay allow us to venture into Gibbston Valley which houses most of the original wineries that put Central Otago well and truly on the pinot noir world map from the mid-1980s. Historical cellar doors visited for tastings included Chard Farm, Kinross, Gibbston Valley and Peregrine. Again, the 2022 vintage appeared a stand-out year.



We also ventured north to Wanaka and took a private fishing charter out on Lake Hawea. It was a most successful outing and we selectively kept some Rainbow and Brown Trout, plus a Chinook salmon for our self-catered accommodation in



Cromwell. Our cottage was on the outskirts of Cromwell, located in a cherry farm and plant nursery, about a 5 minute drive from the famed Bannockburn wineries.

<https://www.cherrytreefarm.co.nz/>

## Central Otago ... *Burgundy of the South*

Recommended cellar doors here included Desert Heart, Te Kano, Mt Difficulty and Dicey. The fresh wild caught freshwater fish presented us with an ongoing challenging task to concoct cooking variations. Our task was facilitated by being within a fantastic plant nursery. Our flaked trout penang curry was adorned with fresh picked lemongrass, Thai basil and kaffir lime, with a variety of chili. Our farm hosts are avid chili propagators with 30 different kinds being nurtured. The fish was either baked to a crispy skin, or twice wrapped in baking paper on the BBQ to retain moisture, either way, the nursery provided fresh dill and tarragon for the wrapped fish. Now some may ponder whether you can pair a pinot with fish, and as we have learnt from some MWFSS dinners, the answer is absolutely. The kiwi pinots are lighter on the oak and tannins and more dominant with rich fruit so they companion sauces and curries quite well, no matter the meat base. However, the Central Otago wine region also excels in white varietals, mainly Riesling, although pinot gris is popular and some traditionalists still persist with superb gewurztraminer and malolactic chardonnays. A growing trend in Otago, especially for the pinot gris and chardonnays, is to short term age them, or a portion, in Acacia barrels to add creaminess, spice and minerality. It is an enticing alternative to the vanilla and toast of oak barrels. Needless to say, we had a bevy of wine choices for our piscatorial meals done umpteen ways.



More dedicated bicycle trails were explored later on the trip, including the famed Lake Dunstan Trail (<https://www.centralotagonz.com/tracks-and-trails/lake-dunstan-trail/>) which has challenging sections like the Cairnmuir Ladder, Hugo Suspension Bridge and Halfway Hut Switchbacks, but not half as challenging as the fortitude required to get past Carrick and Akarua wineries located right upon the trail. Carrick winery has reclining sun lounges on a sprawling lawn with superlative views toward Cromwell and the Kawarau River Gorge that are almost impossible to extract yourself from after a tasting flight and cheese board. Akarua winery is now owned by the famed French Lafite Rothschild dynasty. The consortium has wineries strategically acquired around the world and, while on (security) display, sadly their

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Bordeaux Chateau Lafite wine was not, strangely, available for tasting.

### Cellar Doors visited & highly recommended\*:

**Gibbston** : Chard Farm\*, Kinross\* (Wild Irishman), Peregrine\*, Mt Rosa\*, Brennan, Gibbston Valley, Mora

**Cromell**: Mt Difficulty, Carrick, Akarua, Desert Heart\*, Te Kano\*, Dacey\*, Quartz Reef\*, Domaine Thomson, Maori Point

**Alexandra**: Monte Christo\*, Ruru / Immigrant\* Central Otago ... Burgundy of the South

## Recipe for Beetroot and Date Salad – Carolyn Smalls

### Ingredients

3 cooked and peeled beetroot  
3 soft pitted dates sliced  
½ red onion finely sliced  
2 tbsp flat leafed parsley leaves chopped  
1 tbsp red wine vinegar  
2 tbsp olive oil  
¼ cup chopped walnuts  
Goats cheese, crumbled  
Watercress to garnish

### Method

Dice the beetroot and slice the dates  
Add chopped red onion, chopped parsley,  
Red wine vinegar, olive oil and toss the  
ingredients  
Top with crumbled goats cheese and water cress