

Episode 263 Saturday 20 December 2008

Summer Series Gourmet Granite Belt Chris Parsons & Alastair McLeod

Chris and Alastair take a driving holiday through the Lockyer Valley, Darling Downs and Granite Belt region sampling some of the state's finest produce along the way.

To plan your next driving holiday, log on to the RACQ Trip Planner. It is a free online map service that allows you to map out your journey before you go. It provides a printable map of your chosen route and points out attractions and accommodation options along the way.

Contact www.racq.com.au

Toowoomba

The city of Toowoomba sits in the middle of some of southern Queensland's most productive farmland, so locals are spoiled for choice when it comes to fresh produce.



Wendland Olives sells a range of delicious table olives and olive products direct to the public. Owner Karsten Wendland delights in discussing the finer points of his product with customers. The journey from tree to toothpick begins at the Wendland Olive Grove, an hour southwest of Toowoomba. Varieties grown there include the popular table olive, the Manzanillo, as well as the Frantoio variety that's used primarily in olive oil production.

Alastair demonstrated using the Manzanillo olives to create an olivada - a perfect complement to meat.

Contact Wendland Olives

Shop 1, 76 Bridge Street, Toowoomba
Open Mon-Sat 7.30am-6pm & Sun 7.30am-2pm

www.wendlandolives.com

07 4638 8899

Lockyer Valley

The Lockyer Valley is known as Brisbane's salad bowl. The Mulgowie Farming Company is one of the largest vegetable producers in the area growing everything from pumpkins to baby corn.



Alastair demonstrated how easy it is to jazz up a 'meat and two veg' meal dish using Mulgowie sweet corn and Jap pumpkin.

Cook the vegetables on the BBQ, simply drizzled with oil. The sweet corn is complemented well by the exotic Moroccan spice, Ras al-Hanut. The name translates as 'top of the shelf' and is created by a spice merchant using up to 27 different spices. It works well sprinkled on the corn a few minutes before serving.

Bretts Wharf

Located in the up market suburb of Hamilton, Bretts Wharf has carved out a niche for itself as one of Brisbane's top seafood restaurants. At the helm of the bustling kitchen is Executive Chef Alastair McLeod. The restaurant's menu reflects his passion for fresh local produce. Bretts Wharf is open for lunch and dinner 7 days a week.



Contact Bretts Wharf

449 Kingsford Smith Drive, Hamilton
brettswarf.com.au
07 3868 1717

Felton Valley

Located in the picturesque Felton Valley, Prestbury Farmstay provides an opportunity for visitors to take part in a working cattle property.



Owner Rob and Sally McCreath relocated to the area from Scotland where they owned a dairy farm. They now delight in showing guests around their property. The guest cottage is comfortable and self-contained. Visitors can choose to cater for themselves or join in on the nightly campfires and taste some of Prestbury Farm's fresh beef.

Contact Prestbury Farmstay

prestburyfarmstay.com
07 4691 0195

Stanthorpe

The Granite Belt is regarded by many as the food capital of southern Queensland. The Quart Pot Bakehouse for example offers the ultimate in gourmet pies, with its selection of Wagyu beef varieties.

The area has a large Italian population; Angelo and Mary Scalora grow figs, a traditional Mediterranean crop. Mary bakes her figs in the oven, topped with prosciutto, pecorino cheese and rosemary. Angelo enjoys wild food gathering, a practice popular in southern Italy. Autumn is a good time for collecting wild fennel seeds by the side of the highway.

The Granite Belt has developed into the state's premier wine region. Its 52 cellar doors produce 1.5 million bottles of wine every year. Training the new generation of viticulturalists is the Queensland College of Wine Tourism. Students come to the college from across southeast and southern Queensland to learn the art of making a fine drop. The college also operates as a hospitality-training centre and students run the restaurant and cellar door. All proceeds go to continuing the program.

Stanthorpe celebrates the harvest with The Apple and Grape Festival. Highlights include the grand parade and the grape crushing competition. There is plenty of local food on offer as well as wine from some of the area's finest wineries.

The Granite Belt has plenty of options when it comes to accommodation. Azjure Retreat is a contemporary take on a country getaway. Its three well-appointed studios include all of the luxuries like a king-size bed, spa bath, coffee machine and LCD TV. All command a stunning view over the surrounding countryside.

Contact Quart Pot Bakehouse; 37 Maryland St, Stanthorpe; 07 4681 1765

Contact Azjure Retreat; azjure.com.au; 07 4684 1232

Contact Apple & Grape Festival

The next Apple and Grape Festival is planned for 2010.

Contact Stanthorpe Downs & Granite Belt Tourism for more information

southerndownsholidays.info/; 07 4661 3122