

Paringa Estate



Having a “wine epiphany” has become something of a cliché, but for Lindsay McCall, it led to the creation of one of the finest wineries in Australia.

The wine he tasted was a 1980 Seville Estate shiraz, which he ordered in a restaurant one night in 1983. Until that moment, he hadn’t realized that Victoria could produce a wine of such caliber.

In 1984, Lindsay, a geography teacher at the time, bought an old north-facing orchard. A year later, after clearing it, he began planting the ten-acre property with vines. He sought advice on planting shiraz in the region, but was told by a local vigneron that it wouldn’t ripen in the cool maritime climate of the Peninsula. Not to be deterred, he planted it in the warmest spot.

Those early years of winemaking on the Peninsula were a time of trial and effort. Back in the 1980s no one really knew which grape varieties would succeed. Whilst not the first to plant a vineyard in the region, Lindsay is counted as one of the brave pioneers, which include other such notables as Nat White, Brian Stonier and “Bailes” Myer. And it’s thanks to the courage and perseverance of these few, that the Mornington Peninsula is now one of the top wine regions in Australia.

The early years at Paringa were tough. In fact the first twenty years were. The first vintage was in 1987, and Lindsay had high hopes. He went out and bought an old milk vat to press the one tonne of grapes he had forecast. It was a big shock when the tonne shrank to a mere 140 kilos! Ever resourceful, Lindsay dusted down an old fish tank that was stashed in the garage. This proved to be more than adequate for his first crush! The wine didn’t win any awards, but was enjoyed by family and friends.

The first commercial vintage at Paringa was a year later. The fish tank went back into the garage to gather dust, and out came the milk vat! With the three tonnes of fruit he picked, Lindsay made around 200 dozen bottles. Vintage 1988 was officially on the market!

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The ensuing vintages had to be organized around his teaching career. Picking would be scheduled for weekends, and Lindsay was often up all night pressing grapes. His hands would be stained purple from the juice, so he would have to scrub them with bleach to make himself presentable for the private girls' school where he was working. It wasn't until 1996, that he was finally able to give up the day job and become a full time winemaker.

His first gong was at the Yarra Valley Wine show where he took out gold for his 1990 shiraz, and over the ensuing years, numerous awards followed. In 2007, the teacher who had no formal training in wine was awarded the "Best Winery in Australia," in the 'James Halliday Wine Companion'. Lindsay likens it to being chosen as captain of the Australian cricket team!

As the business grew, Lindsay was able to pursue another vision; to create a restaurant which would make Paringa a food and wine destination. He didn't want to open a café, but a venue which would have high quality food to match his wines. The restaurant opened in 1999.

In 2013 Lindsay hired Head Chef, Julian Hills, whose hard work and culinary vision resulted in the restaurant being awarded a chef's hat within a year, and every year since. It was also awarded "Best Restaurant in a Winery in Australia at the Savour awards in 2014.



The menu is a celebration of locally sourced, seasonal produce. In order to reduce waste, the chef works with whole fish and animals, rather than individual cuts. The beef is generally sourced from Gippsland, the pork from the Western Plains of Victoria and the seafood is local. The chefs love foraging for ingredients in the region. In autumn, wild mushrooms are on the menu; pineys and slippery jacks, and throughout the year he adds wild sea herbs, which he gathers on the local shores such as pig face, samphire, sea parsley and sea mustard.

The restaurant overlooks the undulating slopes of the vineyard, where the Toulouse geese roam. As they're not on the menu, maybe try the Aylesbury duck instead! Pair it with a glass of Paringa Estate pinot noir, and it's one of those matches made in heaven. But then, that's Paringa Estate for you.