

Wine, Food and Farmgate: The very best of the Mornington Peninsula

Hundreds of delicious discoveries around every corner

Hundreds of fabulous wine, food and farmgate experiences are hidden away throughout the Mornington Peninsula, especially in the hinterland where little country roads reveal some of Victoria's top vineyards, farmgates, restaurants and producers.

But until now, there's been no easy way of planning a food and wine experience that takes in the best of the Peninsula and allows visitors to map out their own personalised itinerary.

Mornington Peninsula Tourism has now launched 'Wine, Food and Farmgate' (or 'WFFG' as it's known locally), the most extensive wine and food program ever created on the Peninsula. It embraces everything that's made this region such a sought-after gourmet destination, including chefs and their restaurants, vigneron and their vineyards, artisan producers, growers, orchardists and speciality storeowners.

"The heart of WFFG is a magnificent coffee table book, which beautifully illustrates why the good life on the Mornington Peninsula just got even better," says Alva Hemming, Executive Tourism Officer of Mornington Peninsula Tourism.

"Expanding on the book's themes is the new WFFG website (www.winefoodfarmgate.com.au) which makes it easy for visitors to delve as deeply as they want into every delicious nook and cranny on the Peninsula," Ms Hemming says.

Finding top vineyards and restaurants

For wine lovers, there's plenty of information on vigneron and their wines, and why the Peninsula's cool maritime climate coaxes the very best out of grapes, especially Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

The roll call of the region's top wineries includes Ten Minutes by Tractor, Paringa Estate, Yabby Lake Vineyard, Port Phillip Estate, Stonier Wines, Foxey's Hangout, Montalto Vineyard and Olive Grove and Ocean Eight Vineyard.

Food lovers will have a field day, checking out who's who in the chefs' fraternity, accessing recipes featuring regional produce and finding artisan producers of everything from coffee to chocolate, bread to cheese, olive oil to preserves, honey to locally roasted spices.

There's a vast choice of restaurants and cafes, including the Peninsula's four Chefs' Hat restaurants: Ten Minutes by Tractor (2 hats) and Montalto Vineyard and Olive Grove, Terminus at the Flinders Hotel and Paringa Estate (all 1 hat).

Some of the Mornington Peninsula's best-loved traditional general stores now have a very contemporary take on food, including those at Somers and Merricks. Then there gourmet stores throughout the Peninsula, from the quintessentially Italian DOC in Mornington to Hamper Yourself in Dromana and Stringers Store in Sorrento.

Freshest at the farm gate

The Mornington Peninsula's hinterland is known for its rich red soils, and for the abundant produce that's yielded every season. Red Hill and Main Ridge are home to many growers and producers, including Main Ridge Dairy and Red Hill Dairy, Red Hill Cherry Farm, Sunny Ridge Strawberry Farm, Mock Red Hill Apples and Staples Apples. Some inspired provedores bring it all together under one roof, including Green Olive at Red Hill and Red Hill Cool Stores.

Travel a little further afield to find producers such as Pure Peninsula Honey at Moorooduc and Peninsula Fresh Organics at Baxter. While Mornington Peninsula Chocolates at Flinders and Peninsula Fudge at Rosebud certainly aren't farmgates, any sweet tooth would be crazy not to visit these artisan producers.

Seasonal influences on the Mornington Peninsula are strong, so the website features in-season wine and food events, activities such as picking your own strawberries or cherries over summer and regular events such as the Red Hill and Mornington markets, cosy high teas in winter and summer breakfasts beside a vineyard lake.

Planning your WFFG trail

"Once visitors have decided on the places they'd like to visit, the website helps them plan their personalised WFFG trail and book accommodation," Ms Hemming says. "They can also drop into one of the Mornington Peninsula's Visitor Information Centres to buy a copy of the WFFG book, pick up a WFFG trail kit, maps, recipe cards and a mini cooler bag to hold delicate purchases such as cheese or chocolates."

A number of accommodation operators are also participating in WFFG, including the boutique country hotel Lindenderry at Red Hill, Port Phillip Estate with its luxury apartments, the peaceful Hummingbird Eco Retreat and the seaside Portsea Hotel and Sorrento Hotel.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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Visit www.winefoodfarmgate.com.au to start planning your Wine, Food and Farmgate trail.