

# Mountains of food and drink

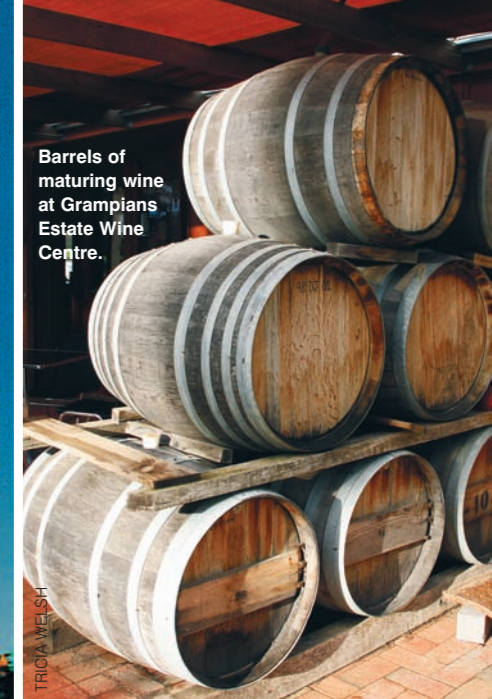
Go west for meat, wine and produce and you won't leave disappointed, as **Tricia Welsh** discovered in the latest in our series on Victoria's food trails.



Relax at Mount Zero Olives.  
Photo: TOURISM VICTORIA

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he Grampians National Park is famous for its rugged natural beauty and outdoor activities. It has more than 160km of walking trails with refreshing waterfalls, scenic lookouts, abundant wildlife and seasonal wildflowers. The Western District farmlands, meanwhile, produce some of the best lamb and beef in the world, including certified Angus beef – where all processes and handlers from farm to sales are certified to ensure a consistently top-quality product – and Hopkins River beef, which is on the menu at many of Australia's leading restaurants. Throughout this lush, cool-climate region, wineries have long been winning accolades for their premium produce, notably shiraz and riesling. And over the years, more and more small producers have set up businesses making top-quality gourmet goods; some available at farmgate sales.



Barrels of maturing wine at Grampians Estate Wine Centre.



Resident workers at Grampians Pure Sheep Dairy, and the finished product (below).



TOURISM VICTORIA



Above: Collect a hamper from Whole Grampians Produce, perfect for a relaxing afternoon.

Left: Stoney Creek Bakery has won medals for its pies.

Photos: TRICIA WELSH

### > FOOD STORES

**Dunkeld Gourmet Pantry** (109 Parker St, 5577 2288) is a modern cafe and larder championing the region's fine produce. Everything is homemade: generous sausage rolls; vegetarian pasties and quiches; hearty country-style pies filled with beef and red wine or chicken and leek. There are ready-to-go Turkish rolls and delicious homemade cakes, many gluten-free. Stock up on local goat, sheep and buffalo milk cheese, sheep milk yoghurt, olives, olive oil and Dunkeld wines. Open Mon-Thu 8.30am-4.30pm, Fri 8.30am-7pm, Sat 8.30am-8pm, Sun 10am-4pm.

**Darriwill Farm** in Hamilton (169 Gray St, 5571 2088) is a chic outlet for its productive farm near Bannockburn. This produce, homewares and wine store and cafe also has top regional produce and uses much of it in its appealing seasonal menu, such as Mount Zero olives, Meredith goat feta, and Doodles Creek lemon and caper mayonnaise in an antipasto platter. Darriwill stocks a variety of local wines, as well as other Australian and imported ones. Open Mon-Thu 9.45am-5.30pm, Fri 9.45am-6pm, Sat 9.30am-3.30pm.

The **Stoney Creek Bakery** (Shop 3, Stoney Creek Stores, Grampians Rd, Halls Gap, 5356 4439) has won awards for its country-style meat pies and vanilla slices. Open daily 7am-5pm.

Let Kerri Cody of **Whole Grampians Produce** (cnr Grampians and Pomonal-Ararat Rds, Halls Gap, 5356 4965) put together a picnic hamper of local produce, such as olives, cheese, fudge, lavender mustard, caper tapenade, freshly baked breads, pastries, cakes and slices. Hampers are customised to order, require a day or two's notice and can be picked up or delivered locally. Open daily 8am-6pm.



Clockwise from left: Mt Sturgeon dominates the horizon from the Dunkeld Gourmet Pantry ... Fresh pumpkins for sale through the roadside honour system ... Stop at Hamilton's Darriwill Farm for a sweet treat ... Spiced shiraz jelly from Nectar Ambrosia, Ararat.

Photos: TRICIA WELSH

### > RESTAURANTS

The Grampians, not noted for showcase winery restaurants, does have one of the finest restaurants in Australia. The **Royal Mail Hotel** (98 Parker St, 5577 2241) has put tiny Dunkeld – population 440 – on the map with its show-stopping food and wine cellar. Housed in an art deco-style hotel, the restaurant has won all major restaurant awards in the country, including Australian Gourmet Traveller's 2009 Regional Restaurant of the Year, and most recently a Vogue award for the 'outstanding use of regional produce by a chef'. Its wine list of 2000 labels has been acclaimed by prestigious magazine Wine Spectator and has one of the world's best collections of Bordeaux; it's also the venue for this year's TransTasman Wine Challenge, pitting the best locals against champions from NZ's Hawke's Bay. In recent years chef Dan Hunter, who worked as head chef in the two Michelin-star restaurant Mugaritz in Spain, has shown his incredible skills through a menu of 10 tasting plates with all vegetables and herbs grown in the restaurant's nearby kitchen gardens. Wine matches are offered with each dish – many of them excellent local wines. There is also a bistro that serves hearty dishes and an excellent small bar menu. Open: restaurant Tue-Sat 6.30pm-9pm (bookings essential), bistro daily noon-3pm, 6pm-8.30pm; bar daily noon-2pm, 6pm-8pm.

Mike Dilisio used to conduct winery tours of the Grampians, and knows the region well. At his new venture, **Nectar Ambrosia** (157-159 Barkly St, Ararat, 5352 7344), he has transformed a former 1859 pub into a smart eatery, wine and local produce store. Daily specials may include a hearty soup, linguini with blue cheese sauce, or an open roast beef sandwich. Enjoy a coffee by the fire and peruse the range of local olives and cheese. The wine shop also acts as cellar door for smaller wineries such as Nowhere Creek, Jillian Wines and Moyston Hills. Open Tue-Sun and public holidays 10am-late.

### > PRODUCE OUTLETS

The 80ha olive grove of award-winning **Mount Zero Olives** (41 Mt Zero Rd, Laharum, 9315 1410) was established in the late 1940s; many of the 6000 trees are now more than 60 years old and are harvested manually each May to June. As well as table olives including kalamata, manzanilla and mixed, sample and buy quince paste, Egyptian-style dukkah, green olive paste and black olive tapenade, plus extra virgin olive oil, red wine vinegar, beetroot and orange relish and basil-infused extra virgin olive oil. Mount Zero also sells locally grown lentils, chickpeas, farro and other grains. Farmgate sales are housed in quaint former school classrooms. Open daily 10am-4pm.

East of Dunkeld near Glenthompson is **Grampians Pure Sheep Dairy** (Glenelg Hwy, 5577 4223). Arrive about 8am or 5pm to see the sheep being milked, and then sample terrific farmhouse cheeses: pecorino-style, a tasty cheddar, sheep-milk feta or seasonal styles such as Wesleydale. Owner Elisabeth Cuming has been making cheese for 20 years and also makes great yoghurts – lemon, vanilla, coconut and tangy natural. Open daily 8am until late.

**Farm Foods Hamilton** (119 Thompson St, 5572 4040) is a family-owned and run retail butchery, liquor and mixed deli business known for its gourmet sausages and quality Western District beef and lamb. Farm Foods grows its own certified Angus beef, ideal for a country barbecue: porterhouse, eye fillet, scotch fillet and well-priced rump steak. Choose from more than a dozen flavoured sausages – perhaps Birregurra beef, Guinness and beef with herbs, red wine and cracked pepper, chorizo or tandoori. Open Mon 1.30pm-6pm, Tue-Fri 9am-6pm, Sat 9am-1.30pm.

See [grampiansproduce.com.au](http://grampiansproduce.com.au) for more local producers. >



Chef Dan Hunter (right) collects fresh produce for the Royal Mail Hotel, Dunkeld.





#### > MARKETS

*Quarterly:* Ararat Seasonal Farmers' Market. 13 Sept, 13 Dec, 14 Mar.

*Third Saturday of the month:* Hamilton Farmers' Market

#### > FESTIVALS/EVENTS

4-6 Sept: Classics in Wartook Valley, [classicsinwartook.com.au](http://classicsinwartook.com.au).

2-5 Oct: Halls Gap Wildflower and Art Show, incorporating Pomonal Native Flower Show 3-4 Oct), [www.visithallsgap.com.au](http://www.visithallsgap.com.au).

17 Oct: Avoca Cup, [www.countryracing.com.au](http://www.countryracing.com.au).

30 Oct-1 Nov: Dunkeld Mosaic of Arts Festival, [www.dunkeldmosaic.com.au](http://www.dunkeldmosaic.com.au).

13-15 Nov: Festival of St Arnaud, [www.visitgrampians.com.au](http://www.visitgrampians.com.au).

1-2 May 2010: Grampians Grape Escape, [grampiansgrapeescape.com.au](http://grampiansgrapeescape.com.au).

For more information on the region visit the website [www.visitgrampians.com.au](http://www.visitgrampians.com.au).

**Top:** Best's is one of the oldest wineries in the region.

**Right:** Take a tour of Seppelt Great Western's underground cellars, or 'drives'. Photos: TRICIA WELSH

#### > INTERESTING WINERIES

Vines have been grown in the region since the 1860s, with many original wineries still producing fine wines.

Just before Ararat, **Mount Langi Ghiran** (80 Vine Rd, Bayindeen, 5354 3207) has one of the best examples of cool-climate shiraz in the country. The winery produces its flagship Langi Shiraz from a 6ha single vineyard on the estate. Try the 2006 Langi shiraz and the 2008 riesling. Open Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, weekends and public holidays 10am-5pm.

Graeme Bertuch and Carolyn Thomas have set up **Off the Beaten Track Wine & Art Gallery** (6669 Western Hwy, Buangor, 5354 5502), a smart iron building in a roadside layby, as a cellar door for their Mount Cole Wineworks and to stage exhibitions of Carolyn's and other artists' work. Try the '04, '05 and '06 shiraz and the medal-winning Fenix Rising shiraz. Buangor Blues night is the first Friday of each month from 6.30pm, with a barbecue and salad. Open daily 10am-5pm, and later on Fridays.

In Great Western, considered the birthplace of Australian sparkling, is **Seppelt Great Western** (Moyston Rd, 5361 2239). An ornamental grape vine surrounds the historic Shaft House cellar door which leads down to 3km of National Trust-classified underground 'drives' with tours Mon-Sat at 11am and 2pm (\$15 adult,

\$8 child). Sample the 2005 Original sparkling shiraz, 2006 Chalambar shiraz or 2006 St Peter's shiraz. Ask about night-time ghost tours, and ghost and gourmet dinners underground. Open daily 10am-5pm.

Also at Great Western, the **Grampians Estate Wine Centre** (1477 Western Hwy, 5356 2400) serves local cheese platters with shiraz jelly and Mount Zero olives. Book a wine tutorial (\$15) with owner Tom Guthrie as he guides you through 10 different wines and their processes. The Black Sunday Friends' Collection reserve shiraz and sparkling shiraz are made from fruit donated by eight local wineries after 90% of Grampians Estate's 3ha vineyard was burnt in the 2006 bushfires. Open daily noon-5pm; tutorials Sun 3pm.

**Best's Wines** (111 Bests Rd, Great Western, 5356 2250) is run by its fifth generation of winemakers. The charming red gum-slab cellar door has an open fire in winter and hand-dug underground cellar. Try the Great Western Bin 'O' Shiraz, the 2008 riesling and the Bin '1' Shiraz. Take a self-guided cellar walk, buy produce and picnic in the grounds. Open Mon-Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 11am-4pm.

Pick up a Great Grape Route self-drive map at [greatgraperoute.com.au](http://greatgraperoute.com.au), or call 1800 446 633.

*Tricia Welsh, a Melbourne travel and food writer, was a guest of Grampians Tourism*

