

Pristine Oysters



2009 PRODUCE AWARDS

For the past year, we've scoured the length and breadth of Australia to unearth the country's finest. And now, we're proud to present the winners of the 2009 *Vogue Entertaining + Travel* Produce Awards

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PHOTOGRAPHY **Sam McAdam** LOCATION **Glebe Point Diner, 407 Glebe Point Rd, Glebe, NSW, (02) 9660 2646**

produce awards

For the past year, VE+T's state judges have been tasting entries sent in from around Australia from food lovers, restaurateurs, providores and producers. In Tasmania, there were Daniel Alps and Annie Parmentier; in Western Australia, Kate Lamont and David Coomer; in Queensland, Kym Machin and David Rayner; in South Australia, Mark McNamara and Mathew Goodlet; in Victoria, Matt Wilkinson and Paul Wilson; and in NSW, Justin North and Alex Kearns. Coordinating this project was Libby Travers, whose expertise and dedication has, once again, been indispensable. Our thanks to them all, and to Dilmah, for its generous sponsorship.

Once finalists were nominated, our national judges – Alla Wolf-Tasker (Vic), Cheong Liew (SA), Matt Moran (NSW) and Philip Johnson (Qld) – gathered at Alex Kearns's Glebe Point Diner in Sydney to taste and deliberate on the winners. This year, due to the high standard of entries, they've also awarded medals to a number of other finalists.

To celebrate, we asked our judges to create dishes using the winning ingredients, to be served at a glamorous dinner at Hamilton Island's Qualia resort. You can see (and cook) the results in our feature on page 80.

Congratulations to all our winners and finalists. You'll find their details on page 162. And don't miss our August/September issue to find out how to nominate for the 2010 awards.



Our national judges: Cheong Liew, Philip Johnson, Matt Moran and Alla Wolf-Tasker

The following three categories were awarded by *Vogue Entertaining + Travel* in consultation with all the judges.

OUTSTANDING USE OF REGIONAL PRODUCE BY A CHEF

DAN HUNTER, ROYAL MAIL HOTEL, VIC

When we featured Dan Hunter and his enthusiastic young team of chefs in our 2008 August/September issue, we were impressed not only by his laudable mentoring skills and the innovative food he was turning out at a restaurant in the tiny hamlet of Dunkeld, but where and how he was sourcing his ingredients. Hunter has made a similar impact with his support of local produce, such as Mount Zero olives and lentils, Grampians Pure Sheep Milk and cheeses, Hopkins River Beef, Glenloch game birds and Warrnambool butter. Just as impressive is how he's aiming to grow all his own vegetables and herbs, as well as sourcing small-scale local ingredients including honey collected from hives on a nearby farm and yabbies from local dams.

THE REGIONAL AWARD

DAYLESFORD MACEDON, VIC ORANGE, NSW

Equal honours go to these two regions, and rightfully so, as both are outstanding in their promotion and support of local producers. Daylesford Macedon's success can be seen by the number of finalists that appear in this year's Awards honour roll, including Daylesford Organics, Holy Goat, Meredith Dairy and Sher Wagyu. But it's also down to the passionate advocacy of local supporters, such as Awards judge Alla Wolf-Tasker, whose annual Regional Producers Day at Lake House, and her use of those producers' products at her restaurant, have been a driving force in bringing together producers and consumers.

The Orange region, too, has been exemplary in its support of local producers through its annual Taste of Orange F.O.O.D week, a festival of regional food and wine now in its 16th year. This year, the event included the '100-mile diet', encouraging participants to eat ingredients sourced within 100 miles of Orange. Due to the enthusiasm with which the idea was received, it has continued long after the festival ended. Added to this has been the introduction of Taste Orange @ Bondi, bringing the festival to the city, and raising awareness and money for drought-affected farmers.

OUTSTANDING SUPPLIER

AUSTRALIA ON A PLATE, NSW

Without people like Lynne Tietzel and Robin Freedman, not only would companies such as our Producer of the Year, Holy Goat, have struggled to find a market, but we consumers may

never have had the opportunity to taste their wares. Since 1995, Australia on a Plate has been tireless in its encouragement of small producers, nurturing their products and making them accessible to a wide audience through retail specialists and restaurants. So many of our past and present winners are represented by AOAP – Holy Goat, Woodside Cheese Wrights, Meredith Dairy, Island Pure, Warrnambool Cheese & Butter, Barambah Organics – it's only fitting that they be rewarded for bringing them to our plates.

FOOD HERITAGE/ SUSTAINABILITY AWARD

SPRING BAY MUSSELS, TAS

We've added 'sustainability' to this year's Food Heritage Award in recognition of the groundbreaking work Spring Bay is doing in its field. Based in Tasmania, Spring Bay is the only mussel producer in Australasia with its own hatchery, which means it's not harvesting young wild mussels ('spat') and depleting natural resources. This, in conjunction with its farming practices, whereby the mussels are grown on deep-water culture ropes, results in a clean, consistently high-quality product. Said Alla Wolf-Tasker: "They're using really exemplary farming methods, in the forefront of world's best practice. It's so very good to see."

BEST NEW PRODUCT

REDGATE JURASSIC QUAIL, NSW

"We use these quails at Aria – they're easy to cook and are far more succulent than the smaller types," said Matt Moran of Redgate's Jurassic Quails. The result of years of research and selective breeding by owner Charlie Scott, these are the heaviest of their kind being bred anywhere in the world. Apart from their size and succulence, though, the best thing about them is, as Alla Wolf-Tasker commented, the fact that they've been crossbred with native species of brown and stubble quail. This ensures they are still resilient enough to be able to mate naturally and fly. Better adjusted birds means more flavoursome meat – and happier chefs and diners.

CONSISTENTLY EXCELLENT PRODUCT

BLACKMORE WAGYU, VIC

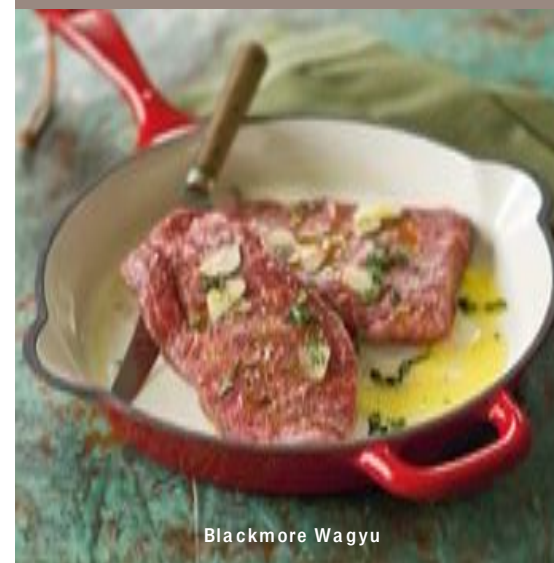
In 2007, David Blackmore was not only the winner in our From the Paddock category, but was our first inductee into that year's inaugural Hall of Fame. His wagyu beef continues to achieve some of the best meat grades outside Japan, and remains the choice of top-class Australian, Asian and US chefs, including Matt Moran at Aria in Sydney, and Thomas Keller at The French Laundry in California.

"What can you say? Blackmore is in a league of its own. I've eaten wagyu all around the world and this is on a par with some of the best in Japan. Perfection"

MATT MORAN



Murray River Salt, medallist



Blackmore Wagyu



Spring Bay Mussels



"Tasmania's Spring Bay Mussels are pristine, clean and sustainably cultivated. The result is a flavour that's really sweet and tastes of the sea"

CHEONG LIEW



"Redgate Jurassic Quail are amazing – they have the succulent flavour of quail, but are the size of a poussin, with a decent amount of meat on them. Really useful"

ALLA WOLF-TASKER



Redgate Farm Jurassic Quail

"Spanner Crabs Noosa are one of the stand-out products from this year's awards. It's rare to see fresh crab in such immaculate condition. A truly unique product"

PHILIP JOHNSON



From the Earth medallists
Ashbolt, Lentara Grove
and Joseph olive oils



produce awards

FROM THE EARTH

DAYLESFORD ORGANICS, VIC

The number of medallists in this award is testament to the range and excellence of the produce and value-added products available in Australia. The winner, Daylesford Organics, is a small NASAA-certified organic operation based in Muskvale, just outside Daylesford, which specialises in a variety of apples and heirloom vegetables, as well as eggs (for which it also picked up a medal in the From the Paddock category). Here, though, owners Brendon Eisner and Kate Ulman, who took over Musk Valley Farm in 2000, have been recognised for their superb range of vegetables, grown using methods that include biodynamics, permaculture and biological farming. "It's delightful to eat these heritage carrots, yellow beetroot, green beans and Middle Eastern zucchini. They're fresh and crisp, and bursting with sun energy and flavour," was Cheong Liew's enthusiastic reaction.

MEDALLISTS: *Cuttaway Creek raspberry vinegar (NSW), Darling Mills Farm herbs and salad leaves (NSW), Bunyconellen olive products (Qld), Bauers Organic Farm sweetcorn (Qld), The Australian Caper Company (SA), Joseph olive oil (SA), Ashbolt olive oil and elderberry products (Tas), Frogmore Creek garlic (Tas), Lentara Grove olive oil (Tas), Murray River Salt (Vic), Thorogoods Cider (SA).*

FROM THE DAIRY

HOLY GOAT LA LUNA, VIC

For the past two years, Carla Meurs and Anne-Marie Monda's Sutton Grange dairy has, well, creamed the competition and taken out the top prize for this category. Once again, the judges were unanimous in their praise of the pair's Holy Goat La Luna, despite it being up against some highly acclaimed entries including Meredith Dairy, which won last year's Consistently Excellent Product category. Sutton Grange is an A-grade NASAA-certified organic dairy based in the foothills of Mount Alexander, Victoria. All effort is made to farm the property sustainably, and to that end, the herd of goats is kept small to ensure that the native herbs, grasses and shrubs on which they feed free-range continue to flourish. Cheeses are handmade daily on the property using a process based on traditional French soft-curd styles. "This is from my neck of the woods," said Alla Wolf-Tasker, "and it has amazing consistency. At Lake House, we put it on warm French toast with roasted pear, and serve it with a local pear cider, but La Luna is wonderful just as it is."

MEDALLISTS: *Woodside Cheese Wrights (SA), Ballycroft Barossa Artisan Cheese (SA), Bruny Island Cheese Co (Tas), John Bignall Tasmanian Highland Cheese (Tas), Meredith Dairy (Vic).*

FROM THE PADDOCK

WHITE ROCKS VEAL, WA

White Rocks is situated about 160km from Perth at Brunswick Junction, WA, and has been running as a dairy farm for more than a century. It's been in the same family, the Partridges, since they established it in 1887. Unlike European veal, calves here are allowed to grow naturally until they are three or four months old. They're fed milk from the farm's dairy herd, as well as a selection of grains, and are reared without growth hormones or antibiotics. The result is not the 'white' veal found in Europe, but a beautifully textured, flavoursome product that has gained a reputation around Australia and overseas, and can be found in most of our top restaurants. "For anyone who doesn't think we have great veal in this country, White Rocks rewrites the rules," said Philip Johnson.

MEDALLISTS: *Papanui eggs (NSW), Redgate Farm Jurassic Quail (NSW), Macleay Valley Rabbits (NSW), Mayura Station wagyu (SA), Pure Suffolk Lamb (SA), Daylesford Organics eggs (Vic), Sher Wagyu (Vic), Blackmore Wagyu (Vic), Glenloth Free Range squab (Vic), Castricum Brothers lamb (Vic), Green Eggs (Vic).*

FROM THE SEA

PRISTINE OYSTER FARM, SA SPANNER CRABS NOOSA, QLD

Two winners, two superb products – one from South Australia, the other from Queensland. The first, Pristine Oyster Farm, has been run for 10 years by brothers Tony, Brendan and Nick Guiderais, and is located at Coffin Bay. The waters here are surrounded predominantly by national parks and the lack of agricultural run-off means that conditions are perfect for growing oysters. "I visited Coffin Bay while taking part in SA's World Food Summit last year and these little things are grown in the most pristine of environments – hence the name, I suppose! Beautiful flavour," said Alla Wolf-Tasker.

Jason Sgro and Alison Reed's Spanner Crabs Noosa crabmeat will be familiar to anyone who's had the pleasure of sampling it at the Settler's Cove Noosa Food & Wine Festival. Highly commended last year, it's a worthy winner in 2009. At present, the company's goal is to reduce packaging and freight by at least 75 per cent to minimise their carbon footprint. "This has a fantastic, almost gelatinous, texture and clean flavour," said Matt Moran.

MEDALLISTS: *Ferguson Australia lobster products (SA), Woodbridge Smoked Ocean Trout (Tas), Spring Bay Mussels (Tas).*



THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN
THE HEART OF THE NATION

VOGUE
ENTERTAINING + TRAVEL
produce awards 2009

PRODUCER OF THE YEAR

HOLY COAT, VIC

Three-time consecutive winners in our dairy category, Carla Meurs and Anne-Marie Monda remain outstanding in their dedication for producing a boutique, seasonally driven range of cheeses. While their continued commitment to sustainable farming practices has meant limiting production, it has also resulted in consistently excellent standards, and is reflected by this award. Carla Meurs and Anne-Marie Monda will be inducted into VE+T's Produce Awards' Hall of Fame.

OUTSTANDING FARMERS' MARKET

WILLUNGA, SA

Willunga Farmers Market started modestly in 2001, with a sign in the Willunga general store proclaiming 'To Market, To Market' inviting local producers, interested observers and foodies to a meeting to discuss its prospects. Six months later, a market was born. As with any good produce market, it's a community-based project, with the aim being first and foremost to engage farmers with locals. To this end, regular shoppers here are offered membership, with advantages such as a 10 per cent discount and a voice in how the market is run.

THE MAGGIE BEER AWARD FOR AN OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO AUSTRALIAN FOOD

STEPHANIE ALEXANDER

There can't be many kitchen shelves that don't boast an edition of Stephanie Alexander's food bible, *The Cook's Companion*. For more than two decades she's influenced countless home cooks and nurtured and inspired young chefs and food lovers in her role as a restaurateur and prolific author. But it's her most recent initiative, the Kitchen Garden Foundation, that makes her such a worthy winner. Stephanie started the program two years ago in Victorian schools and it's now blossomed into a national organisation. The philosophy is simple – to instil in kids the joy of growing and cooking their own organic, seasonal food, without turning it into a 'health' crusade. "From early on, Stephanie was a supporter of small producers, and mentor to so many of today's great chefs. This is a culmination of her life's work. Her vision and drive in bringing people together around the country makes this the most exciting thing happening on the Australian food scene today," said Maggie Beer. **VE+T**

"Pristine's tiny, plump Pacific oysters are absolutely delicious, rich and sweet in flavour. They're very similar to Japanese Kumamoto oysters"

CHEONG LIEW



White Rocks Veal

"White Rocks Veal has been going for years and it remains consistently the best of its kind in Australia. It's true veal, and I've never seen or eaten a bad dish where it's been featured"

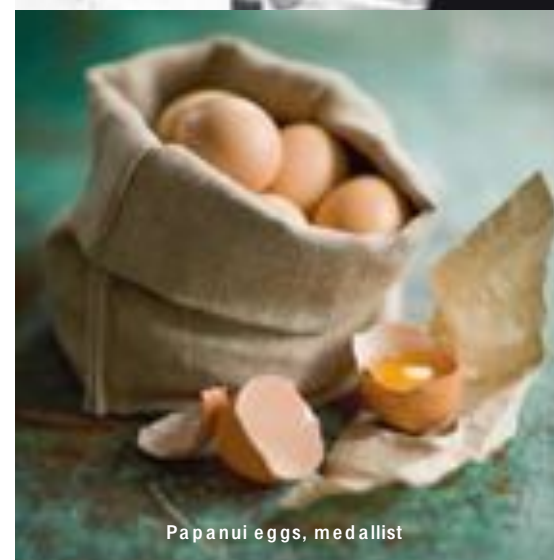
MATT MORAN



Spanner Crabs Noosa

"Daylesford Organics is just down the road from us, and we're blessed that we get their beautiful heirloom vegetables at Lake House. It's a small farm, but produces an incredible variety of fruit, vegetables and eggs"

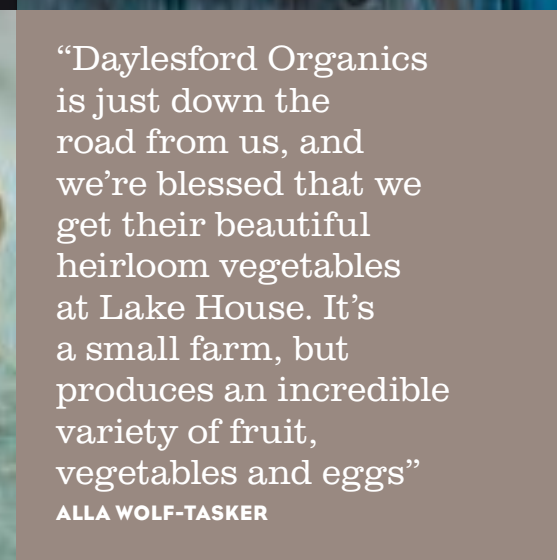
ALLA WOLF-TASKER



Papanui eggs, medallist

"La Luna is quite simply a world-class cheese that Australia should be proud of. Its depth of flavour and texture equals the very best that Europe has to offer"

PHILIP JOHNSON



Daylesford Organics



Holy Goat La Luna



HOLY GOAT CHEESE MARIMEKKO LUMIMARIA TEA TOWEL IN WHITE STEM STOKIST DETAILS LAST PAGES