

# THE CANBERRA review

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## Creative menu unlike city restaurants By Wendy Johnson

Schöneegg, pronounced “sher neck”, is Swiss German for “pretty corner”. Owned by Richard and Evelyn Everson, who met in London while working at the Mayfair Hotel, this piece of paradise just 30 minutes from Canberra is a dream come true for this energetic couple. After several months of searching, they found eight hectares of bare paddock in Murrumbateman and transformed it into a guesthouse which has won major tourism awards every year since 2004. Now that the builder’s dust has settled on the construction of four new rooms (one fully accessible for guests with disabilities) and a well-appointed private guest lounge, it’s a perfect time to visit.

The Eversons bring more than 20 years experience to the guesthouse – he on the food side and she on the accommodation side. Richard, a Canberran, has worked at the luxurious Hotel Intercontinental, Geneva, and on the QEII. But does he pine for his days as a Michelin star chef when he could source premium produce from around the world at the snap of a finger? The answer is no and that’s because Richard says he finds quality local produce easy to source, so much so that he designs his seasonal menus around it.

“We get our beef from the farm across the road,” says Richard. “We work with our local butcher to make sausages using a secret recipe. Friends and neighbours are also supportive, providing fresh, hand picked elderberries, plums, Roma tomatoes, and Murrumbateman Magestic mushrooms.”

Other suppliers include La Ionica chicken, Kiah free-range eggs and La Barre olive oil. Jams, chutneys and preserves, made with love by Evelyn, are used in dishes and can be bought by guests.

Café Schöneegg’s menu isn’t huge but features creative dishes not



readily seen in Canberra restaurants. Lingering over a glass of wine and canapés, which included delicious dates wrapped in prosciutto and lavender cheese puffs, was an excellent start. The seared bobby veal entrée was as tender as can be (these calves are usually only one to three weeks old) and I enjoyed every bite of the spring onion crepe filled with mushroom ragout. The mushrooms were truly majestic.

For a main, my friend enjoyed the duck breast on Moroccan style pilaf, made all the more special with apricots and dates. I found the pan-fried blue-eye cod on baked potato with horseradish cream sauce and caviar delicious. And to top off the experience we each indulged in dessert. Once more inspired by the stories of local produce, we selected the plum and elderberry tart which was excellent, as was the smooth and creamy vanilla panna cotta with orange syrup one of the prettiest desserts I've been presented with in a long time. Evelyn and Richard also create "fantasy" menus for guests craving a special dish. The most popular, says Richard, involve pheasant and crayfish.

Country Schöneegg Guesthouse operates a gallery with work by local artists (exhibitions change regularly and the art is for sale). Handmade jewellery, books, and speciality food items are displayed throughout the guesthouse and for sale.

Even for a mid-week getaway, Canberrans can easily be at the office after breakfast by 9.30, and yet feel they've you've been away forever.

*Country Schöneegg Guesthouse is open seven days. The café is open to the public for lunch and dinner Friday and Saturday and lunch Sunday. It's BYO but it's in wine country so visit a regional winery on the way. 381 Hillview Drive, 6227 0344. The guesthouse is pet friendly (large and small pets).*