



A vine romance: (inset left) Owner Susan Bruce at her Poachers Pantry and (main) the serene landscape of Poacher's Way  
Pictures: Mark Graham



Pampered: Jordana Graham gives a client a facial at Geranium House



Country comfort: Country Guesthouse Schönegg owner Richard Everson



The good life: Breakfast at Country Guesthouse Schönegg



Show time: Exhibits at the Beaver Galleries in Deakin

## essentials

- **Poachers Pantry**, Marakei, Nanima Rd, Hall; open daily 10am-5pm, 6230 2487, poacherspantry.com.au
- **Silo Bakery**, 36 Giles St, Kingston; open Tuesday-Saturday 7am-4pm, 6260 6060, silobakery.com.au
- **Country Guesthouse Schönegg**, 381 Hillview Drive, Murrumbateman; 6227 0344, schonegg.com.au

- **Beaver Galleries**, 81 Denison St, Deakin; open Tuesday-Friday 10am-5pm, Saturday-Sunday 9am-5pm, 6282 5294, beavergalleries.com.au
- **Geranium House Day Spa**, via Spring Range Rd, Hall; Monday-Saturday 9.30am-4.30pm, by appointment only, 6230 9220, geraniumhouse.com.au
- **More: thepoachersway.com.au**

romance in making wine that way," says McGhie. The magic that makes it to the bottle is down to the terrain. The limestone and volcanic soils make it a perfect location to grow wine, and the location they choose for each variety helps bring out the grape's special character.

Once you've made your way from the vineyard to the cellar door, there are the wines to consider. Don't forget to ask about the exhibitions – the vineyard has a reciprocal agreement with Canberra Contemporary Art Space – and there are some beautiful wind chimes made from wine bottles hanging from the veranda to greet you on your way in.

Back to the wines. The tastings are a relaxed, sit-down affair, and there are five

reds and whites to choose from. The selection includes riesling, pinot gris, chardonnay, rose, pinot noir, merlot, graciano, and shiraz.

Tempranillo is their most dangerously drinkable red, and the wine for which they're becoming best known. A regional food platter is the key to really enjoying this venue, and it's an excellent way to soak up a couple of hours in the afternoon.

Mount Majura Vineyard has won awards for their visitor experience, and after some time in their welcoming surrounds, you'll know exactly why.



- **Mount Majura Cellar Door**, Mount Majura Vineyard, RMB 314 Majura Rd, Majura; open Thursday-Monday 10am-5pm, 6262 3070, mountmajura.com.au

## the fireside festival

**THE** Fireside Festival began as a way of highlighting the food, wine and art in Canberra and surrounds. It eventually evolved into The Poacher's Way, keeping attention on the area all year, but the August festival remains the pre-eminent excuse to head to our colder climes. Highlights include:

### ALL MONTH

- **Free Gluhwein Tasters:** Warm spiced wine is such a great way to warm up in colder climes, you might want more than one. Pialligo Estate, 18 Kallaroo Rd, Pialligo, 6247 6060

- **Studio And Kiln Tours:** Go behind the scenes with the potters at this historic building and enjoy a complimentary hot chocolate. Old St Luke's Studio, 1045 Shingle Hill Way, Gundaroo, free, 6236 8197

### WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 4

- **Wine, Wisdom And Wood-fired Pizza:** With fine food, this trivia night has a tasty twist. Flint In The Vines at Shaw Vineyard Estate, 34 Isabel Drive, Murrumbateman, \$30, 6227 5144

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 7

- **Black Diamond Dinner:** A truffle degustation menu prepared by brilliant young chef Chris Whitlock. Lambert Vineyards, 810 Norton Rd, Wamboin; \$150 food only, \$190 matched with wines, 6238 3866

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 7

- **The Burning Of The Totems:** Everything here is far too beautiful to burn, so they're carving a special piece of wood to go up in flames in tribute to the traditional bonfire. Bungendore Wood Works Gallery, 18 Malbon St, Bungendore; free, 6238 1682

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 14

- **Poachers Fireside Degustation Dinner:** A warming five-course meal created with seasonal produce from one of the finest food purveyors in the region. Poachers Pantry, Marakei, Nanima Rd, Hall, \$100 food only, \$130 matched with wines, 6230 2487

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 21

- **Annual Muster And Campfire Lunch:** Enjoy the excitement of a sheep muster on horseback before lunch and a tour of the Glenlee shearing shed. Burnelee Excursions On Horseback, 30 Dicks Creek Rd, Murrumbateman, \$140, 6227 5850
- **More: firesidefestival.com.au**

## secret sydney



### SAMARAI PARK RIDING SCHOOL

90 Booralie Rd, Terrey Hills; 9450 1745, samaraipark.com

**Vibe:** Horse heaven.

**AS COUNTRY** kids growing up on a farm near Dubbo, August 1 was a date of great significance for my brother and sister and me. Our parents would always wake us up with the words "pinch and a punch" before adding "horses' birthday" to the greeting. We would fill our pockets with sugar cubes, raid the fruit bowl for overripe apples and head out into the usually frosty morning to feed our sometimes trusty, always cheeky steeds.

We weren't the only horse lovers celebrating this special occasion with our four-legged friends. August 1 is the designated birthday for every horse in the southern hemisphere.

To the uninitiated it probably sounds a little ridiculous for an animal to have a set birthday.

Why not celebrate on the day they are actually born, one might ask.

There is a logical explanation. The date was established by the racing industry as a measure for the sale and racing of thoroughbreds. It's like an age group cut-off point and the same practice applies to thoroughbreds in the northern hemisphere, where the designated date is January 1.

Tomorrow in paddocks and stables across Australia ponies and horses will be offered treats such as sugar cubes, apple cores or an extra scoop of grain in their feed bin to mark the day.

At the long-established Samarai Park Riding School, equine residents will be presented with fresh carrots to crunch on by every rider in every lesson and staff have a celebration of their own planned – they're off to lunch.

Situated on 2ha, Samarai Park offers lessons for all ages and levels. It has three arenas including two Olympic-size dressage rings and a jumping arena and a number of trails around the property that feed into the beautiful Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park which has a number of popular horse tracks.

All of which means it is possible to celebrate the horses' birthday without a long drive to the country. Tally ho.  
**Jenny Ringland**