



Out & about

EVENTS

JULY 3

Irish roast

Enjoy a Sunday roast from noon to 9pm at Bridie O'Reilly's, Chapel St, Prahran. Live music starts at 4pm.

Cost: \$14.90

Ph: 9827 7788

JULY 3

Farmers' market

Discover the best in farm produce and gourmet foods, including venison and buffalo, wines and plants at the Gisborne Farm and Produce Market, Hamilton St, Gisborne, from 9am-1pm.

Ph: 5428 3043

JULY 9

Wine dinner

Emeu Inn, Heathcote, will host the sixth annual Deep Winter Wine Dinner featuring a six-course degustation menu matched with eight Heathcote red wines made by John Ellis of Hanging Rock winery.

Cost: \$125

Ph: 5433 2668

CLASSES

JULY 9 & 10

Christmas cooking

Get in early and make traditional Christmas puddings, mince tarts, shortbreads and more at a weekend class at William Angliss. Great for Christmas in July or as a dress rehearsal for December.

Cost: \$300

Ph: 9606 2111

Off the shelf

PASTA SAUCE

Make tasty pasta for two in a flash with a jar of Bertolli gourmet sauce. Available in seven flavours, just pour, heat and serve; \$3 in supermarkets.



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Foodie

Food news and views with **BOB HART**

MARVELLOUS MUSSELS

WHEN it comes to the consumption of our marvellous, home-grown mussels, Australians simply must try harder.

In mussel-bound parts of Europe, for example, every citizen consumes about 1.3kg of the gleaming molluscs a year.

In Australia, the best we can manage, anywhere, is about 300g a person a year. And as I like to dispatch about 1kg of the delectable little blighters a month, clearly some of you aren't pulling your weight.

And there is no excuse: our best fish shops and many of our restaurants are full of large, superbly flavoured Spring Bay mussels grown deep in the pristine waters off Tassie's east coast. And these are as good as any in the world, and better than most.

The season is in full swing and, in case you hadn't noticed, mussels are dirt cheap and dead easy to cook.

The Tassie industry tries to make things easier for us every year.

They recently introduced a machine that shaves the beards from mussels, making the job of the home cook even easier.

The simple French approach — sweat an onion, some garlic and maybe a chilli in olive oil, slosh in white wine, toss in the mussels and cover until they open, whereupon you add parsley and serve with crusty bread — is best.

Tasmanian mussels arrive in Melbourne within a day of being hauled from the water, and will keep for seven to 10 days. And whatever you do, don't fall for the old wives' tale about the mussels that fail to open being dodgy: they're not.

The ones you should discard are any that fail to close, even when sharply tapped, before cooking.

The ones that fail to open are simply playing hard to get and, frankly, you should not stand for it.

DOYLES DRAMA

MIGHT there be legal action in the wind relating to a Sydney restaurant review?

Sydney food critic Matthew Evans, who knows his stuff, has given Sydney's iconic *Doyles on the Beach* at Watsons Bay a ferocious caning.

In his review last Tuesday, Evans described the fish in the *Doyles* fish and

fast fact

Minchin, as well as being the name of a federal polmie, is a Chinese food item made of fermented wheat gluten.



Picture: NICK OSBORNE

Shell out: Phil Lamb sorts through Tasmanian Spring Bay mussels.

chips, something of a signature dish at the popular tourist haunt, as "heroically bad".

Diligently, Evans returned before writing his review — just in case he had caught them on a bad day. But no.

"I didn't finish a single dish on either occasion and nobody thought to ask if there was anything wrong with the food," he wrote.

And in summary: "This isn't a place to take out-of-towners. It's an overlauded, overexposed and over the hill fish'n'chipper in a great location."

He scored it 7 out of 20. Oh dear.

SPOIL SPORTS

OUR food police, I regret to report, are up to their old tricks. This time, it is the meddlers from AQIS — the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service — doing the blundering.

The product on which they have suddenly put the kibosh is one that may sound odd, but causes serious drooling among foodies who have spent time in

Italy. The dish is lardo — an extraordinary Ligurian dish of pork fat which is aged with fresh herbs, set into blocks, then thinly sliced and eaten, rather like prosciutto. It is a wondrous thing.

Permission was recently given, after years of lobbying, for the admirable Enoteca Sileno, the Italian importers in Carlton North, to bring in lardo — a dish that Italians have been eating for more than 500 years without reports of harm to anyone.

But suddenly, AQIS has invoked a draconian Act, the sort they adore, the permission has been withdrawn, and the shipment, which had been about to leave Italy, has been cancelled.

John Portelli, the Enoteca Sileno food guru who seems to spend his life trying to find ways around our absurd food regulations — even New Zealanders can buy lardo, not to mention everyone else in the civilised world — is saddened, but philosophical.

"We won't give up," he promises. Good.