

## **Mornington Peninsula Regional Awards for Excellence**

There were many winners announced last night at the awards presentation for the Mornington Peninsula Regional Awards for Excellence, held at Morning Star Estate.

Salix Restaurant took out the most contested award of Restaurant in a Winery, competing against 9 others including -Stillwater at Crittenden, Max's Restaurant, Paringa Estate, Barmah Park Restaurant, Pier 10, La Baracca Trattoria and Hickinbotham of Dromana, as well as Ten Minutes By Tractor and Montalto who were recognised as Finalists in this category.

La Petanque in Main Ridge featured prominently, taking out Fine Dining and Excellence in Front of House. La Petanque focuses on presenting unique, South of France cuisine, matched with excellent service by people who are professionals in the industry. This was clearly recognised and rewarded by the judges.

Another stand out venue was The Long Table, also taking out two awards – Modern Australian and Excellence in Local Wine or Beverage. The Long Table received the highest score for the use of regional wine or beverages in their wine list, taking into consideration the diversity of wines offered from a range of producers in the local area. The Long Table is a wine bar / restaurant not actually located within a winery itself, offering visitors plenty of variety - *"We offer guests diversity of wine from the region and beyond. Our strong wine and food culture amongst staff enables guests to enjoy the best the Peninsula has to offer"* says Samantha Fitzgerald, co-owner.

Red Hill Brewery also featured throughout the night taking out two awards – Café Restaurant and Excellence in Local Produce, as well as providing their Golden Ale as part of the degustation meal enjoyed by attendees. Karen Golding from Red Hill Brewery participated in the Awards for Excellence to *"promote our fine handcrafted ales as a unique and important part of the Mornington Peninsula gourmet experience"*. Since opening in 2005, Red Hill Brewery has picked up a string of awards in the Australian and International Beer Competitions, however being recognised as the best among their local peers and in a region so often talked about for its wine, is refreshing.

Bamboo in Rye took out the award for Informal Dining, Foxeys Hangout Winery took out Gourmet Retail venue, Peridot Lake Estate took out European Restaurant and Vines of Red Hill was awarded New Restaurant, awarded to a

new restaurant or new operator, or existing operator undertaking a complete renovation or change of cuisine style.

Mornington Peninsula Gourmet together with Restaurant & Catering Victoria have been delighted with the response to these Awards. This is the first year the two associations have joined forces to present the Awards, utilizing the knowledge and experience of Restaurant & Catering who have been running these Awards for the past 10 years. "It is important to recognise the work that goes on in the regional food scene" said Kevin Wyatt, President of MP Gourmet. "These awards recognise excellence across a broad range of dining experiences – restaurants, cafes, bistros and more. We are also recognising the individual elements that go into creating a great dining experience; such as good coffee, front of house service, local wine lists, etc."

Two experienced judges visited each venue and anonymously rated the business to the nationally recognised Restaurant & Catering Evaluation System (RACES). RACES rates businesses against consumer preference data compiled through research into many thousands of dining experiences. This enables statistical benchmarking against others in the same category. Each venue now looks forward to their detailed feedback report to use in training and continuous improvement initiatives.

Winners and finalists of the Mornington Peninsula Regional Awards for Excellence progress to the Victorian Awards for Excellence held on 5 August 2008. Winners will automatically progress to the Savour Australia National Awards for Excellence to be held in Brisbane on 27 October 2008. Good luck to our Mornington Peninsula representatives!

#### WINNERS AND FINALISTS BY CATEGORY

##### **Café Restaurant**

Red Hill Brewery – winner  
Merricks General Store – finalist  
Café Jett – finalist

##### **European Restaurant**

Peridot Lake Estate – winner  
The Garlic Kiss – Finalist  
Acquolina Ristorante – finalist

##### **Gourmet Retail**

Foxeys Hangout Winery – winner  
Morning Sun Vineyard – finalist  
Onde Fine Food Café – finalist

##### **Informal Dining**

Bamboo – winner  
The Rocks Mornington – finalist  
The Boyz 4 Breakie – finalist

**Modern Australian**

The Long Table – winner  
Linden Tree at Lindenderry – finalist  
Loquat – finalist

**New Restaurant**

Vines of Red Hill – winner  
[no finalists]

**Restaurant in a Winery**

Salix Restaurant – winner  
Montalto – finalist  
Ten Minutes By Tractor – finalist

**Fine Dining**

La Petanque – winner  
[no finalist]

**Excellence in Local Produce**

Red Hill Brewery – winner

**Excellence in Local Wine or Beverage**

The Long Table

**Excellence in Coffee**

Montalto

**Excellence in Front of House**

La Petanque