



VIEW

from the verandah

D'ARENBERG'S HEAD CHEF PETER RESCHKE HAS HAD THE STOVES HUMMING AT THIS ICONIC MCLAREN VALE RESTAURANT FOR THE PAST EIGHT YEARS - AND HIS ENTHUSIASM FOR THE PLACE IS STILL BUBBLING OVER.

WORDS AMELIA BALL

It was more like a lesson in what not to do in the kitchen, or so says Peter Reschke. A six-month stint spent cooking on Croatia's Dalmatian Coast was not so much a culinary inspiration as a brilliant adventure for this chef and his family. "Where we were, every venue had the same menu. Everything was either deep-fried, chargrilled or beaten to within an inch of its life," Peter says.

"But what really surprised me was that everything was so seasonal. You'd go to the market one day and everyone would be selling strawberries, the next day it would be watermelon... Here in Australia you can get whatever you want, but over there it was hard to design a menu with those products coming and going in a short timeframe. On the plus side, the produce was always just picked."

It's no surprise then that Peter has loved working with the abundant fresh produce in his home state of South Australia since his return, clocking up nearly eight years at d'Arry's lauded restaurant, d'Arry's Verandah in McLaren Vale. And now, together with restaurant manager and wife Jo, the venue is entering a new phase. It follows the recent



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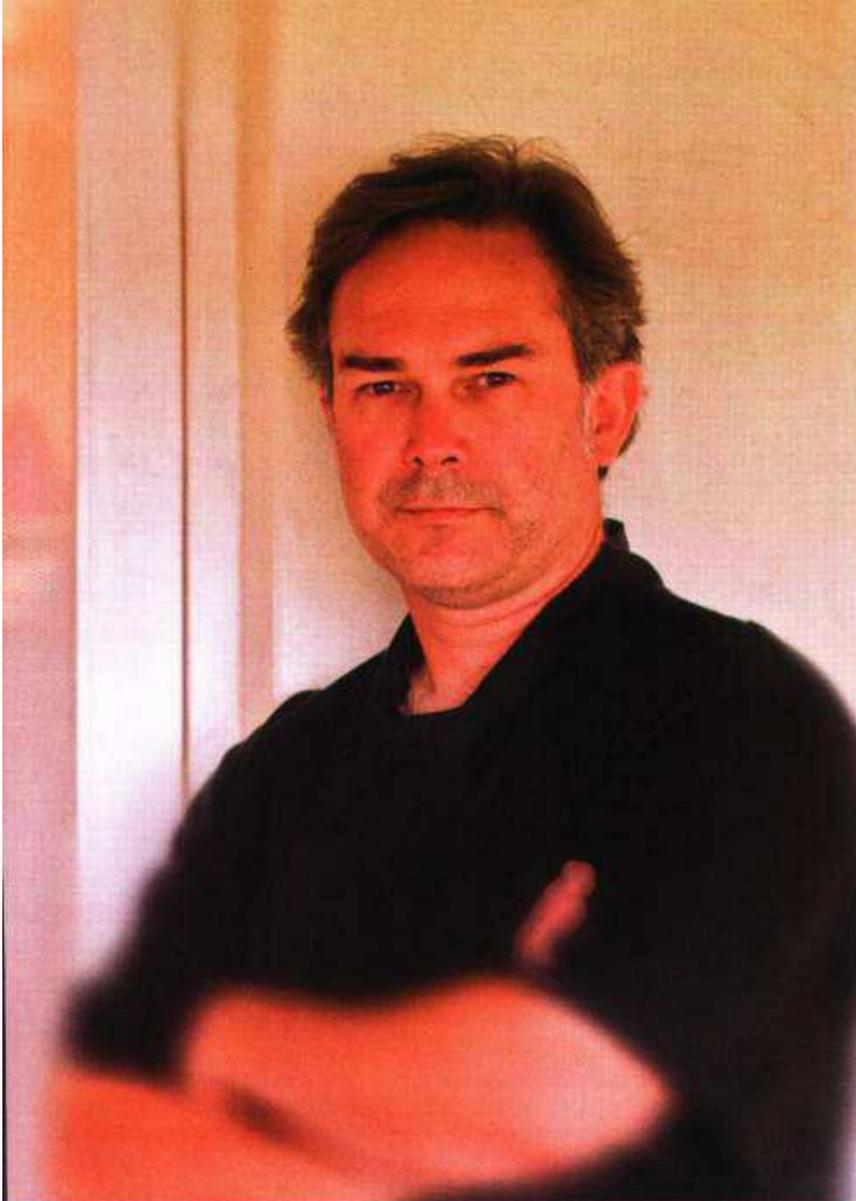
Peter Reschke has clocked up 35 years in professional kitchens and still loves to cook when he gets home.

departure of long-time co-head chef Nigel Rich, who left to start his own food and wine venture nearby. "It's great for him and it's exciting for us too," Peter says. "We've got a new second chef, Mark Hammond, and we've put on a few new staff. It's all looking great."

Despite the changes, it's clear the much-loved food and wine experience at d'Arry's Verandah won't be undergoing any dramatic shifts. It still comes down to great local produce, internationally inspired dishes and a vast selection of wines. "There is so much local produce down here that's just so good," Peter says. "We source local ingredients wherever we can and I love to experiment with different flavours. We get beautiful tomatoes from just down the road, wild mulberries from an old tree that's over 100 years old... It's just everywhere."

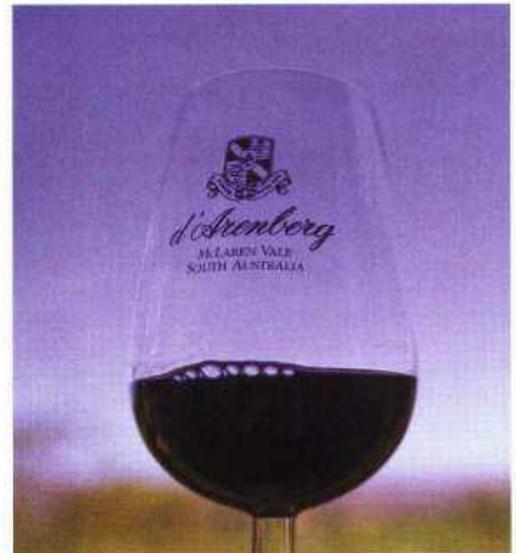
Peter likes to describe the restaurant's cuisine as global. "Right now, we have a Sri Lankan duck curry, a Thai-inspired salmon fillet with a green mango, coconut, mint and coriander salad, and one of our signature dishes is crab ravioli with lobster medallions and lobster bisque. It's been on the menu for about seven and a half years!"





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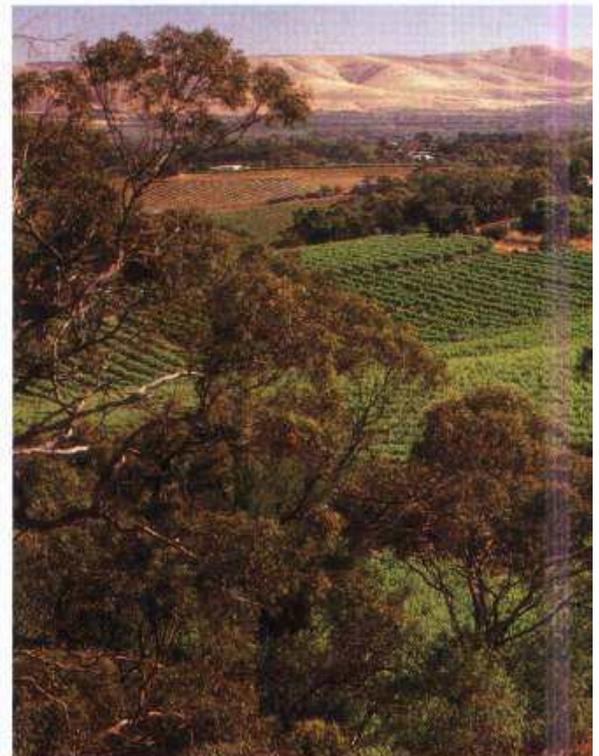
PETER RESCHKE, D'ARENBERG





“When you get a perfect strawberry and you put it in your mouth and it just explodes, what else do you want to do with it? You don’t want to muck it around too much.”

PETER RESCHKE



And then there’s the exceptional seafood. “Snapper is caught just out in the bay and occasionally we get some local squid.”

After 35 years spent cooking, Peter is far from tired and continues to seek out inspiration for his own kitchen. An annual research trip is always a highly anticipated break for both Peter and Jo, who originally met through work – Jo on the restaurant floor and Peter in the kitchen of the same venue. Each year, the pair takes off to Sydney and Melbourne to “literally pig out”. With an itinerary that reads with the likes of Flying Fish, Bentley, Tetsuya’s and Longrain, it’s a big few days but they always return full of ideas. “We do breakfast, lunch and dinner – and a few others in-between – to see what everyone’s doing,” he says. “Quite often we’ll write a couple of menus in that time.”

As for food and wine pairing, Peter says winemaker Chester Osborn’s ever-growing range of wine makes his job easy. “Chester is always producing new wines – we finally have a white sparkling with the new Dadd and also a new rosé. That brings us to about 40 wines in the [d’Arenberg] tally,” he says. “We’re very lucky in that respect because I don’t have to worry about what food goes with the wines because I’ve got so many wines to choose from.” It also helps that Jo really knows her wine, as highlighted with the wine matches for their nine-course degustation.

For all his longevity as a chef, it’s interesting that cooking wasn’t exactly a calling. “I had no idea what I was going to do [after school] and my grandmother had a friend whose son had just finished his chef’s apprenticeship at the Park Royal in Adelaide,” Peter says. “I was about to turn 15 and thought I’d go in to see what it was like, and a week later I got the letter saying I’d got the job.” Having always enjoyed making cakes and biscuits, it wasn’t too much of a stretch and so a career was born.

After his apprenticeship, Peter did a stint in Sydney and on return to Adelaide, he worked at several venues before scoring the second chef’s role at Reilly’s Restaurant – an Adelaide institution. This wasn’t just a pivotal step in his career; it also brought him together with chef and restaurateur Peter Jarmer who would become a mentor.

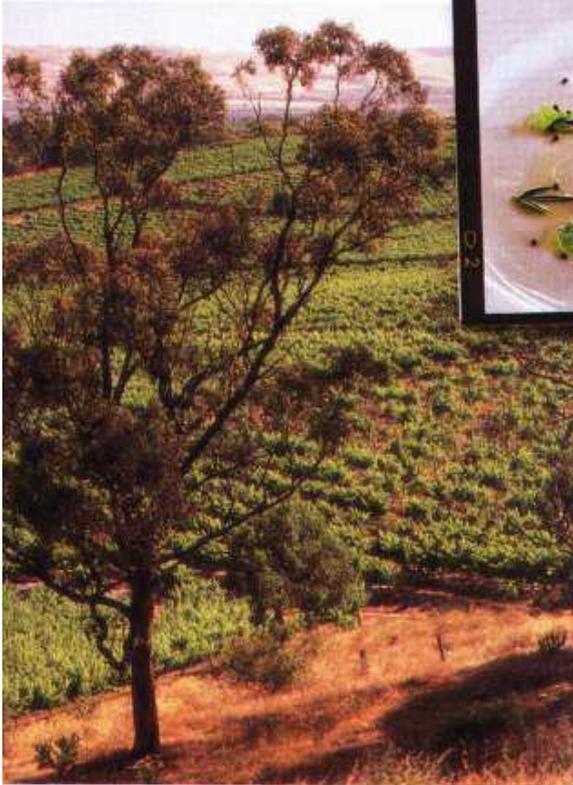
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(top left) Good food and wine, and an afternoon on d’Arry’s Verandah; (above right) the inspiring McLaren Vale outlook; (top right) A brilliant dish to make at home – with a chef’s step too.

“He taught me to taste things, to look at something and improve on it, make it look better, always assess it, always use fresh produce... He’s the real master and a real gentleman.” Interestingly, former co-head chef Nigel also worked under Peter Jarmer, which meant the former co-chefs had similar styles – no doubt handy when working together so closely for so long.

From roles in Sydney, Melbourne, Croatia and Adelaide, as well as running his own Rundle Street cafe for seven years, Peter has enjoyed a diverse career. But almost eight years on at d’Arenberg, Peter is as happy as ever. “Chester and d’Arry are fantastic employers and it’s lunches only, which is a huge drawcard,” he says. “For a chef it’s a nice gig. You get to go home and cook for the family.” The location doesn’t hurt morale either. “The restaurant is in an old homestead so we’re on a hill, looking down over vines and through the Willunga Hills. It’s absolutely gorgeous and it constantly changes with the seasons.”

The restaurant is even more of a Reschke family affair these days, with Jo and Peter’s teenage son now in the kitchen on dish duty part-time. It’s fitting in context of



**From d'Arry's
Verandah...**

**SUGAR CURED
SALMON WITH
POTATO SALAD,
ROE AND
KIPFLER CHIPS**

*Recommended wine:
d'Arenberg The Money
Spider Roussanne*

Ingredients

Salmon

- 1 fresh salmon fillet - skin on
- 1 bunch fresh dill
- 1 tablespoon mustard seeds
- Black pepper, cracked
- 1.2kg sugar
- 1kg table salt
- *You can use quality smoked salmon to skip this step.*

- 1 Find a tray that fits the salmon fillet.
- 2 Combine the mustard seeds, pepper, sugar and salt, and sprinkle a layer of this mix on the base of the tray.
- 3 Rip some dill over this and lay the salmon on top, skin side up, and sprinkle more of the curing mix and dill on top to completely cover the fish.
- 4 Cover with cling wrap and refrigerate for at least 24 hours.

Filling

- 500g boiled potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1/2 bunch spring onions, finely sliced
- 50g cornichons, diced
- 1/4 bunch dill, chopped
- 150g aioli (or good mayonnaise)
- Salt and pepper to taste

- 1 Once the potatoes are cooked, allow them to cool and dice them into small cubes.
- 2 Add the spring onions, cornichons and dill, season with salt and pepper, and add the aioli or mayonnaise and fold through to hold it all together.

Assembly

- 1 Wash the salmon to remove the curing mix and pat the fillet dry with a paper towel.
- 2 Slice the salmon as thinly as possible.
- 3 Line a soufflé mould with cling wrap. Then line with the salmon slices overlapping each one with the next.
- 4 Let the slices cover the base and the sides, with the salmon hanging over the top.
- 5 Spoon in the potato filling, pat down with a spoon and fold the ends of the salmon over the top.
- 6 Allow it all to set for a few hours before serving - overnight is ideal.
- 7 Turn out to serve. Garnish with Kipfler chips, sour cream, salmon caviar and baby herbs.

Where is it?

d'Arry's Verandah Restaurant

Osborn Road, McLaren Vale
South Australia
Open: seven days, lunch from 12pm
Bookings: 08 8329 4848
www.darrysverandah.com.au

d'Arenberg being a proud, family owned winery, with the Osborns now celebrating their 100th year in the wine business. Fourth generation winemaker Chester is at the reins, while father d'Arry remains hands-on. "He still gets out on the mower and is always in the office," he says.

While the winemakers leave the restaurant team to do what they do best, Peter admits their enthusiasm is infectious. "Chester's so excited about the wines that he produces and he's always experimenting with different grape varieties," he says. It sounds a little like Peter's approach in the kitchen. "It's all about experimenting with different flavours and being true to the produce. When you get a perfect strawberry and you put it in your mouth and it just explodes, what else do you want to do with it? You don't want to muck it around too much."

When asked how he's stayed at the job for so long, Peter has a simple response. "How can you stop something that you enjoy doing?" he asks. "I just enjoy eating, which is what it comes down to. I really don't think I could do anything else. I enjoy it and I enjoy making people happy. I love seeing people with a smile on their face. That, to me, is what cooking is about - it's about entertaining." 🍷