

Clockwise from left: the Barossa's verdant vines; preparing handmade pasta at cooking school Food Luddite; home-grown culinary mogul Maggie Beer; red grapes are the valley's forte; Casa Carboni staff aprons; Moroccan chicken and raisin tarts at Maggie Beer's; a look into Casa Carboni; chef Mark McNamara of Food Luddite; multihued bottles double as decor at Casa Carboni



CONSUMING PASSION

FOCUS ON THE FOOD

The stunning surrounds of the Barossa now boast yet more bounty: cookery courses that offer a range of tastes from across the globe, says MARK CHIPPERFIELD

When the first German-speaking Silesian settlers arrived in the Barossa in the 1840s they brought with them a passion for land and self-sufficiency. As a result, the Barossa soon became South Australia's richest agricultural region, growing wheat, barley, stone fruit, apples and pears, among other produce. The region also became known for its smoked meats and

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charcuterie. The Barossa’s spectacular rise as an international wine region in the late 20th century naturally overshadowed these deep, culinary roots but the advent of “paddock to plate” dining and, more recently, the emergence of three cooking schools are putting the spotlight firmly back onto Barossan food.

Local cook and entrepreneur **Maggie Beer** (maggiebeer.com.au) led the way with her famous pheasant farm in Nuriootpa – this modest enterprise has now spawned a global food brand. Maggie now conducts regular cooking classes at the Farm Shop, demonstrating how to use her home-grown products such as verjuice, corn-fed chicken and, of course, pheasant pate.

While Beer draws heavily on the Barossa’s English and German food traditions, chef Mark McNamara spreads his culinary net much wider, teaching his students how to cook classic French, Indian, British and North African dishes.



At table: lunch at Angaston’s Italian-inspired Casa Carboni

Formerly executive chef at Appellation, the Barossa’s most exclusive dining room, McNamara launched his own cooking school called **Food Luddite** (foodluddite.com) last year with an emphasis on the simple pleasures of home cooking and the importance of choosing fresh, local ingredients.

But it is the opening of **Casa Carboni** (casacarboni.com.au) in Angaston which has been the most dramatic shake-up to the Barossa’s gastronomic image. Italian-trained chef Matteo Carboni has brought a touch of la dolce vita to the Barossa, offering a thorough immersion in the culinary traditions of northern Italy. His intimate classes (which are limited to just six people) cover everything from pasta-making to soups, ragouts and rich, chocolate desserts. The three-hour Taste of Italy masterclass includes a visit to the Barossa Farmer’s Market and a four-course meal, with matching Italian wines. ♦



ON TWO WHEELS

COME ALONG FOR THE RIDE



Named in honour of the Australian pro cyclist, the **Jack Bobridge Track** is the Barossa’s newest attraction. Stretching 27 kilometres, the beautifully graded cycling and walking trail links the townships of Gawler and Tanunda and traverses some of the loveliest countryside in the region, linking a number of excellent cellars in the process, including Kellermeister, St Hallett and Jacob’s Creek.

Suitable for all cycling levels, expect to see all manner of native wildlife, including kangaroos, parrots and echidnas. The first stage of the track, from Tanunda to Lyndoch, is already operating, with the final section due to open soon. *Quality mountain bikes are available from Barossa Bike Hire, barossabikehire.com.au; for more information, visit the Barossa Information Centre, barossa.com*