

# 'Five star' introduction to local wines

LEONGATHA winery, Caledonia Australis, presented its first winemakers' dinner in Leongatha on Thursday night.

Held at Carino's, the event was hugely popular with about 80 guests coming from across South Gippsland and beyond.

Chef Paul Van Rooy presented some exciting food to accompany the current and yet to be released Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs of Caledonia Australis.

The menu included

roasted pumpkin soup and Tom Yum soup; chargrilled salmon served with cucumber and fennel salad; roasted duck breast with orange and cardamom syrup, sweet potato salad and balsamic dressing; a main course of parsley crusted lamb cutlets with lemon myrtle jus; followed by a range of Gippsland cheeses served with warm bread.

Caledonia Australis general manager Norman Tranter, and Martin Williams, Master Winemaker, presented wines and discussed selections.

"We have set ourselves the objective of producing premium and super-premium wines from our Pinot Noir and Chardonnay vineyards at Leongatha," Norman said.

"Currently we have more than 18ha of vineyards with 12ha of Pinot Noir and 6.5ha of Chardonnay over three separate vineyard locations."

The Tilson vineyard of 4ha, comprising Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, fronts the South Gippsland Highway on the boundary of Leongatha.

The Nolman vineyard, five km to the north of

Leongatha, is planted with both types of grapes, as is the Mardan vineyard.

"Fruit from the older vines make up the estate and reserve label wines," Norman said.

"The fruit from the younger vines is bottled under the Mount Macleod label."

"The three vineyards are close planted with a low cordon height and mainly spur pruned with some trials of other pruning methods."

"The philosophy driving all the vineyard management practices is to continually strive for improved fruit quality and well balanced vines, with the sure knowledge that this will be reflected in the wines."

Winemaker Martin Williams began consulting with Caledonia Australis in 1995 and is one of Australia's leading cool climate winemakers. He has extensive experience in Australia, the US and Burgundy.

The vineyards are divided into small blocks and the wine from each block is made separately. The Pinot is fermented in open vats prior to aging in the French oak, of which about 30 per cent is pure.

The Chardonnay starts fermentation in stainless steel and then runs to barrel to complete fermentation.

Some Chardonnay barrels are allowed to undergo a secondary (malolactic) fermentation. All the Chardonnay barrels are periodically stirred for about some flavors from the year's lees.

The barrels for both the Pinot and Chardonnay come from several coopers and the oak comes from several forests in France.

Caledonia Australis wines have won awards both in Australia and overseas.

Australian wine writer James Halliday, rates the 2001 Chardonnay at 95/100 which puts it in the top 10 Chardonnays in Australia.

He rates Caledonia Australis as a five star winery, his top category.

The 2001 and 2003 vintage wines produced by Caledonia Australis are available in Leongatha and may be enjoyed in many fine restaurants in Melbourne, elsewhere in country Victoria, Sydney and Queensland.



Function coordinator Anne Westaway relaxes with Kevin Taranto and Sue Flemming, all of Leongatha, at the winemaker's dinner.



The combined talents of Carino's chef Paul Van Rooy and Caledonia Australis winemaker, Martin Williams, made for a great evening of top class wining and dining.



Having fun: Collin McRae, of Leongatha, with Jill Wellard and Myra Vance, both of Koonwarra.



Enjoying a social time: Back row, from left: Daniel Skinner, of Kongwak; Nora Sist, Wonthaggi; and Jenny Denney, Korumburra. Front: Dr Claire Rickard, Warragul, and Gabor Mihala, Warragul.



Away from home: A Western District team of health professionals in Leongatha to present a two day dairy farmer workshop took time out to celebrate the birthday of Sue Brumby (centre) at the dinner. From left: Larry Neeson, Stuart Willder, Sue Watt and John Martin.



Out and about: Stadium 4 Cinema Complex manager, Kerrie Giles with managing director of Evans Petroleum Gippsland, Stuart Evans.



Here's to Leongatha: organisers of Leongatha's first winemaker's dinner, from left: Stadium 4 Cinema Complex manager, Kerrie Giles; Caledonia Australia marketing manager, Norman Tranter; winemaker Martin Williams and Carino's Caffe and Winebar function coordinator, Anne Westaway.