

Eco-friendly wines Advertising Feature

Balanced approach delivers big flavours

A slice of heaven behind the Blue Mountains is producing top-quality wines and food using holistic practices.

Mother Nature has always understood the delicate balance of biodiversity, however it's taken Western civilisation a bit longer to catch on. While the widespread introduction of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers last century was lauded for its cost-effective increase in agricultural output, these chemicals have left a trail of environmental degradation.

Soil quality, plants, micro-organisms, animals and even humans are all negatively impacted. It's why so many local food growers and winemakers, who focus on premium produce, have organic and biodynamic certifications.

Leading the charge in Mudgee, a picturesque wine region behind the Blue Mountains, three and a half hours' drive inland from Sydney, is Lowe Family Wine Co. With noted winemaker David Lowe and SMH Food Hall of Fame inductee executive chef Kim Currie at the helm, they have been certified organic for more than 15 years now, and practising biodynamic farming principles for the past decade.

So what's the difference? "David always likes to joke that organics is about what you can't do, and biodynamics is about what you can do," explains daughter and Lowe Family Wine Co communications manager, Bronte Currie.

Everything they produce on the



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Bronte Currie

The Lowe Family Wine Co's 400-hectare 'Tinja' farm in Mudgee. Photo: supplied

sprawling, 400-hectare 'Tinja' farm, from the grapes for Lowe Wines to the fresh fruit, vegetables and herbs for on-site restaurant Zin House, reception venue The Pavilion and town-based bakery Althea by Zin, are grown without external intervention, using permaculture practices to emulate the natural environment.

This is complemented by biodynamics, a soil preparation technique that creates a self-supporting system of microbial activity that feeds the plants, which Lowe adopted after observing the best wines in the world were always biodynamic.

"Now he's drawn to it not only because they create top-quality wines, but also because it's better for the earth," says Currie

of this regenerative approach. To further enhance the terroir – that combination of factors specific to a region, such as soil, climate and terrain, which influence the distinctive character of the wine produced – the vines of their Shiraz and award-winning Zinfandel are un-irrigated and un-trellised, which allows the grapes to respond naturally to their environment.

This means each Lowe wine is unique to the vintage it was grown. "Our wines really tell a story that is distinct to Mudgee, including the varying conditions and people that are a part of it each year," she says.

Set in a modern farmhouse, with views of these vineyards, Zin House is a 'one-hatted' restaurant, an accolade it has been granted

by the SMH's Good Food Guide awards for the past five years. Dining there is slow, and deliberately so.

"Kim's dream with Zin House was to create a restaurant where we cook the food we grow, and people have time to wander the gardens and meet the chefs. So we specialise in leisurely long lunches and dinners, taking time over good food and wine," explains Currie.

The Cellar Kitchen offers produce and platters, to either accompany cellar door tastings or take to the lawns with a bottle and picnic rug. There's also vineyard and farm tours, a designated native wildlife sanctuary, farm animals, gardens, orchards and annual events, plus boutique accommodation available.



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