

# Tamar Valley

This month, we explore Tasmania's famous wine route – visit cellar doors, sample the food and enjoy country-style hospitality.

STORY BY PETER BOURNE

ON APPROACH to Launceston, you fly over Relbia, its uniform rows of vines a reminder that Tasmania is a small but increasingly important wine state. While the Apple Isle grows less than one per cent of Australia's plantings, its grapes sell for high prices and demand often outstrips supply. Why? It's home to some of the country's best producers – including Josef Chromy, Jansz and Tamar Ridge – whose vines are planted on the western banks of the long and lazy Tamar River.

Stay at Wines for Joanie Farm Cottage among grapevines and grazing land

Drive just 20 minutes north of Launceston towards Legana and you'll hit the Tamar Valley Wine Route dotted with cellar doors that range from slick to rustic. There's a swathe of fragrant wines to sample: scintillating sparklings, crisp, dry whites, fine chardonnays and sophisticated pinot noirs. Do a daytrip out of the city and fill your glass along the way, stopping to sample fare as fresh as the ocean air.

French winegrower Jean Miguet planted La Provence (the state's oldest vineyard, now called Providence) at Lalla in 1956. A decade later, Graham Wiltshire established the first Heemskerk vineyard (now Vélo Wines) at Legana. A joint venture between Heemskerk and champagne house Louis Roederer spawned Jansz, resulting in one of the first topnotch "méthode Tasmanoise" wines made with the traditional grape varieties and methods of Champagne.

In 1974, Dr Andrew Pirie helped to establish Pipers Brook Vineyard and was later involved in Tamar Ridge and his eponymous sparkling wine brand. Pirie remains a sage-like advocate for the region, most recently with his latest label, Apogee.

No mention of Tamar Valley could omit Josef Chromy, a Czech immigrant who developed a successful meat-exporting business before investing in a string of wine ventures: Rochecombe (now Bay of Fires), Jansz, Heemskerk and Tamar Ridge. Chromy finally established his own label in 2007, as a sprightly 76-year-old.

Mingling with the stalwarts are fresh faces Fran Austin and Shane Holloway at Delamere and Joe and Lou Holyman at Stoney Rise, while Jim Chatto and Natalie Fryar are injecting new life into Pipers Brook Vineyard. Clearly, a tour of the region should be on your agenda.





## Tasting notes

↓  
**TAMAR RIDGE  
RIESLING**

2016 / \$28

Founded by Josef Chromy and now owned by Brown Brothers, this is a label that's going places. The wines offer great value, with this riesling benefiting from a little bottle age. The citrus perfume is backed by delicious lemon sorbet flavours and a refreshing acidity. Perfect with whitebait fritters.

↓  
**HOLYMAN  
PINOT NOIR**

2016 / \$56

Joe Holyman grew up in Tassie, fleeing to the mainland for cricket, food and wine before settling in the Tamar Valley. He pushes the boundaries with great success. This drop oozes dark cherry, damson plum and wild herbs. The palate is energetic, with gently persuasive tannins. Team it with duck in all its guises.

↓  
**JOSEF CHROMY  
PEPIK  
PINOT NOIR**

2016 / \$25

Chromy's childhood nickname, Pepik, is attached to this amazingly good-value pinot noir. Winemaker Jeremy Dineen has crafted a light, bright red with strawberry and cherry aromas, a succulent palate and a gentle finish. Serve it slightly chilled with salmon and sweet potato fishcakes.

↓  
**CLOVER HILL  
CUVÉE  
EXCEPTIONNELLE  
BLANC DE  
BLANCS**

2010 / \$60

Taltarni was one of the first mainland brands to plant bespoke sparkling vineyards near Launceston. This wine is the epitome of the style. Lime blossom perfume mingles with warm toast and marzipan. Try it with Barilla Bay oysters.

↓  
**BAY OF FIRES  
CHARDONNAY**

2016 / \$52

Hardys is another mainland winemaker committed to Tasmania with Arras sparklings and the Bay of Fires brand. White peach, pink grapefruit and a whiff of honey precede a palate that's intense yet agile, with stone fruit, ripe melon and a bright acid finish. Pair it with pan-fried Spring Bay scallops.

**QANTAS EPIQUIRE**

Buy these wines and more at [qantasepique.com](http://qantasepique.com).

