

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

KNEE DEEP IN SUCCESS

KNEE Deep began operation only in 2000 but has rapidly established a reputation as one of the best winery dining options in Margaret River - a region blessed with a number of great eateries. Former New Zealand junior chef of the year Bradley Hornby, formerly of Huka Lodge and Lizard Island, is serving contemporary Australasian cuisine in a lovely vineyard setting, while his partner Liz Buttimore, who has worked in several top restaurants, runs the dining room.

The emphasis is on fine West Australian produce and the menu features entrees like confit of Plantagenet pork belly with white bean and ham hock salad and apple puree or an Exmouth prawn terrine with scallop beignets, while mains may include slow-roasted Mount Barker chicken breast with confit garlic and herb semolina or butter-roasted tenderloin of Harvey beef.

'Trust the Chef' menus of three or five courses cost \$58 and \$79 respectively and desserts are a highlight. The wine list features the Knee Deep wines made by former Leeuwin Estate winemaker Bob Cartwright. The cellar door is open 10am-5pm daily and the restaurant from noon-4pm. Private dinners, including chef's table functions in the kitchen, are available to small groups. Phone (08) 9755 6776; www.kneedeepwines.com.au

PASSES TO SWAN AROUND

SWAN Valley visitors have a good reason to hit local cellar doors with the launch of two new low-cost touring programs. The Cellar Door Pass, which includes \$120 worth of premium wines, premium wine tasting, winery tours and other special offers, retails for \$99 but is valued at over \$200. The Cheese & Wine Trails Pass, at \$55 per couple, includes a hamper of cheese and local produce to take on a four-course progressive tasting to wineries.

See www.swanvalley.com.au or www.cellardoorpass.com.au. The perfect time to visit is for Spring in the Valley, one of the largest food and wine events in the country, held over the second weekend in October every year.

KIMBERLEY CUISINE

LEADING chefs Pete Evans and Chris Taylor headline the 2010 Cooking School Calendar at Faraway Bay, the acclaimed East Kimberley wilderness retreat that hosts regular gourmet events. Chris will stage two Kimberley Cooking Schools in May and Pete, a TV chef, returns for the second annual Celebrity Cooking School in September. Faraway Bay will also host its third annual Bush Tucker and Camp Oven Cooking School in August.

Faraway Bay owner Bruce Ellison says



guests love a gourmet experience in such a remote and unique location. "Our cooking schools are hugely popular because it's a chance to not only learn tricks and tips from some of Australia's best chefs, but also enjoy the freshest local produce in an amazing location."

The schools are conducted in open-air Eagle Lodge, perched on a headland overlooking the waters of Faraway Bay. The four-day packages starting from \$4550 per person include air transfers from Kununurra, lessons, meals and drinks, accommodation in a cabin with 180-degree water views, sightseeing, excursions and fishing. Phone (08) 9169 1214; www.farawaybay.com.au.

DREAM RETREAT BLOSSOMS

PEMBERTON now has world-class accommodation and is about to have its own trufferie. Stonebarn, designed by

an award-winning Parisian architect and handcrafted with local stone and timber, offers beautiful boutique accommodation that's a perfect base for exploring the wineries and gourmet food producers of Pemberton and Manjimup.

Set in 65ha of lush forest, trufferies, rivers and dams, Stonebarn is described as "an idyllic secluded haven" and has just six splendid guest suites with four-poster king-size beds and private balconies overlooking the dam and forest. All have well-equipped kitchenettes and stylish ensembles that include antique claw-foot baths, separate shower and double vanities.

Owner Dion Range spent several years creating his dream retreat, where guests enjoy a full gourmet breakfast and three-course dinner of dishes like smoked trout, avocado and egg cocktail and braised lamb shank teamed with pine nut polenta and broccolini, followed by vanilla panacotta with seasonal fruits.

Stonebarn also makes its own red and white wines and has an extensive cellar, while the trufferie is set to produce its first truffles later this year. Visit www.stonebarn.com.au.

HIRE A HIDEAWAY

MARGARET River has some of the country's most beautiful and affordable rental accommodation. Among the standouts is Baudin Heights at Gnarabup, a rammed limestone home with six double bedrooms, two kitchens, extensive ocean views from all rooms, and a tennis court. It can be rented in its entirety or as two separate self-contained apartments.

Newcomer Jarrah Grove Retreat is nestled within 34ha of forested estate 15 minutes from Margaret River township and features an open-air hot tub on the deck, while the self contained, three-bedroom Arcadia Cottage is in a bush setting. Prices start from \$150 per night. See www.baudinheights.com.au, www.jarrahgroveretreat.com.au and www.margaretriver.com/accom_result1/arcadia-cottage/