



Loyalty to local produce pays for Terrace

innovators

By JULIAN BURGESS

FINDING the best quality local produce is paying off for the Terrace Restaurant at Launceston's Country Club Tasmania.

Over the past year the Terrace has won the Tasmanian Tourism Industry Award for restaurants and catering (twice), the Australian Hotels Association's State award for excellence in fine dining, Wine Spectator award for excellence (two goblets) and Gourmet Traveller's Tasmanian wine list of the year award.

Since food and beverage manager Richard Pobitzer arrived nearly four years ago there has been a major shift to use local produce.

"The Terrace's menu is built around locally sourced products, from grain-fed Cressy lamb and pigs reared at Larmenier Primary School to Blackstone Heights truffles," he said.

There's also the Cape Grim beef, Springfield deer, local salmon, muttonbirds, Pyengana cloth cheeses, organic green-shoot garlic, wasabi, olive oil and cherries.

The list goes on. And then there's the local wines.

Mr Pobitzer said every effort was made to support local producers and that could mean going to farmers markets looking for the best local produce.

"Restaurants usually buy everything in controlled portions so this has really brought the old tradition of buying back," he said.

It is an approach that has attracting diners from all over Australia looking for a special experience and also drawing top chefs like Brad French to the State.

Mr French, who had worked with Mr Pobitzer interstate, joined Country Club Tasmania as executive chef a year ago from Melbourne's Crown Casino.

"If I were sitting in Melbourne I could order all these Tasmanian things but what's amazing for me as a chef is to be at the source," he said.

"Our diners are trying something that is unique.

"The challenge at the moment is to catch the stuff before it goes on a plane!"

Mr French said he liked to work on the "regionality" and "seasonality" of the local food and he had been perfecting that since his arrival.

"We've been developing the relationships with the suppliers and the farmers to get the best quality local products we can," he said.

"If you look at the menu now I'd say 70 per cent of the premium product is local. It could be more than that."

The Terrace's signature events are its wine dinner series and Mr Pobitzer said the Terrace's 2500-bottle, blackwood wine room was of international standard.

He is particularly proud of attracting renowned Penfolds wine maker Peter Gago to Tasmania for the first time four years ago.

The Penfolds Wine dinner in 2006 featured seven of Mr Gago's Grange wines and drew patrons from around the nation.

Other featured wineries have included Henschke, Katnook Estate, St Hallett and Pipers Brook.

After working at some of Australia's top casinos, including Crown and Jupiters, the Austrian-born Mr Pobitzer said people often asked him why he came to Tasmania.

"Tasmania is becoming one of THE islands around the world, because of the climate. I think it will become one of the most sought after islands in the world."



Country Club Tasmania executive chef Brad French and food and beverage manager Richard Pobitzer with Tasmanian truffles and Pyengana cheese.

Picture: NEIL RICHARDSON