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**In search of the perfect combination**

Lovers of fine food and wine are in for some treats. HOLLY RANSON reports.

DEGUSTATION is on the rise in Launceston as the city seeks to raise the bar of its culinary culture.

The exclusive wine dinner series at Country Club Tasmania's Terrace Restaurant showcases the creme de la creme of Tasmanian produce.

Josef Chromy's Relbia vineyard will introduce the yet-to-be-released Josef Chromy Ruby Port at a new three-course, semi-formal dinner on Saturday.

But it is Estelle at Rosevears Vineyard that has produced an accessible, balanced alternative to multiple mini meals: flight plates.

"It's my twist on a classic degustation menu," Tamar Ridge Estates hospitality and functions manager Ian White said.

"With that you need to have half a dozen courses to get the full impact of it, but flight plates are a way of showcasing three different wines with three different courses off the menu.

"They're exactly how they would be in a normal a la carte menu, just smaller portions.

"It's a good way to let people experiment without having too much — the three wines equate to one standard drink — and it shows the range of food that can be matched with different wines."

In keeping with Estelle's philosophy, local produce is used as much as possible and matched with Tamar Ridge's extensive range of vintages from around the State.

The seasonally-defined menu changes every four to six

weeks and is used to highlight the vineyards' current vintages and new products.

Savoury flight plates Alsace Trio, Tamar Burgundy and Bordeaux Blends offer tasters of pasta, seafood, red and white meat, game, vegetables and salad with the matching drop, while the Sweet Noble Rot shows off poached pear, rhubarb and apple crumble and gingerbread loaf desserts.

Estelle is open for lunch every day from 11.30am to 3pm and for dinner from Thursday to Sunday.

● Josef Chromy Restaurant in Relbia hopes to turn its successful Saturday night dinner into a regular weekly function. The three-course meal offers three choices of each course with appropriate wines. Cafe supervisor Sarah Watson said the nights had been very popular but were limited to 40 guests. Last Saturday's menu included slow-roasted quail, confit duck leg and a soft chocolate and quince pudding.

● Penfolds chief winemaker Peter Gago will introduce eight wines to connoisseurs at the Penfolds Classic Dinner at Country Club Tasmania's Terrace Restaurant on August 30. The wines will include a rare 1967 Bin 7 Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon Kalimna Shiraz plus a 1990 Grange and 1998 Barossa Valley Shiraz. Terrace Restaurant chef de cuisine Sean Keating has developed a seven-course menu and canapés especially for the night. "I start with the wines and tasting notes and develop the menu around seasonal local produce and flavours that will work in harmony with the wines," he said.