



Play to your strengths.

It's an old cliché but one that's good advice when it comes to getting the best out of a team's resources.

Nowhere has that been more evident in northern Tasmania's food and wine scene over the past couple of years than at Launceston's Country Club Terrace Restaurant. The Federal Group's top-of-the-line fine dining operation struck a purple patch in 2007, winning a coveted Tasmanian Tourism Restaurant & Catering Service Award, an Australian Hotels Association Fine Dining Award, and an astonishing Two Goblets rating in Wine Spectator's wine list awards for excellence.

Wine Spectator is the world's most influential wine publication and boasts more than two million readers worldwide. Last year's two goblet award put The Terrace on equal footing with seven top Australian restaurants, and among 748 national and international peers.

The coming week sees the Richard Pobitzer-led team setting off on the first of its series of annual winemaker dinners.

Three events have been set down on the restaurant's calendar for 2008 — Friday's dinner with St Hallett's Stuart Blackwell; a June event with Kreglinger Wine Estates' René Bezemer; and an August Penfolds Wine dinner with Grange winemaker Peter Gago.

Stuart Blackwell hales from South Australia's Barossa Valley. He heads up a winemaking operation that has spent the past 20 years showcasing the majesty of the region's century-old, low-yielding shiraz vineyards.

The company's Eden Valley Riesling is invariably counted among the region's best dry whites and has been a prolific trophy winner over the years.

René Bezemer joined Pipers Brook Vineyard as a 19-year-old back in 1988 and has been the company's senior winemaker there since the departure of Dr Andrew Pirie in February 2003. The Belgian-owned company has been playing to its strengths in recent years too, with Pipers Brook Vineyard's Alsace trio of white wines frequently earning the praise of this country's food and wine writers.

Peter Gago and The Terrace have become mutual admirers of one another's talents during recent years. The popular South Australian is a knowledgeable and articulate speaker — though that is hardly essential when a wine portfolio like Penfolds can speak for itself.



2006 Brookland Valley Verse 1 Cabernet Merlot around \$20

This popular WA label is owned by Constellation Wines, aka the Hardy Wine Company. Based on Margaret River fruit, it's a snazzy red blend that frequently provides very attractive, easy drinking wines. The 2006 is particularly good, with a mix of berry and plum fruit, and fine-grained tannins that make it a very satisfying and food friendly drink. Screwcapped and ready to go.



2004 Plunkett Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve The Exception around \$40

This is a very smart reserve grade wine that has its origins in Victoria's Strathbogie Ranges. The region's vineyards are perhaps best known for their strongly varietal whites, but this cabernet proves that Strathbogie can also make genuinely age-worthy reds. Certainly, it's no shrinking violet. There are bold dark flavours and firm tannins here. Once opened, it'll keep for days and days.