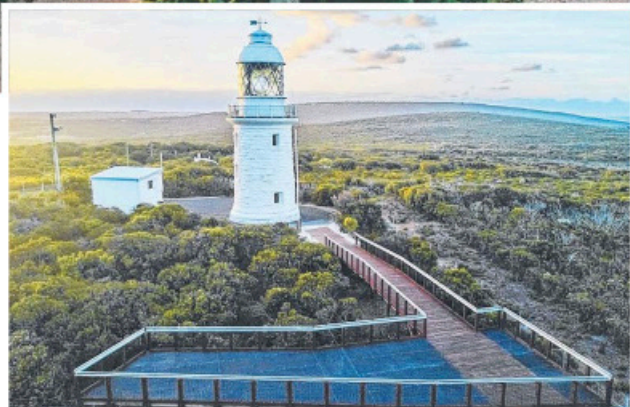


Wine and fine



The best of the southwest

JENNIFER ENNION

01 One of Margaret River's most esteemed chefs, Aaron Carr, opened the intimate and unpretentious Yarri Restaurant and Bar at Dunsborough in February. Carr cut his teeth at the region's founding wine estate, Vasse Felix, and his new venue is centred on

showcasing primarily West Australian produce such as marron, with a menu that changes with the local indigenous "six seasons". He has worked with indigenous guides to learn about, and use, traditional ingredients, including salt bush (similar to sage) and Geraldton wax (like Kaffir lime and lemongrass). Carr focuses on organic and gluten-free dishes as much as possible. Reserve a seat at the kitchen bar and chat to the chefs while they grill the likes of prawns, octopus and kangaroo in a wood-burning oven;

02 Although best known for its grapes, the Margaret River region, about a three-hour drive south of Perth, also has a great mix of businesses dedicated to brews and spirits, including the Margaret River Distilling Company. Here, you can join an intimate blending class (from \$150) at the so-called Giniversity to learn how to infuse gin with a selection of about 30 botanicals, including juniper, coriander and lemon peel. Giniversity opened its doors a year ago and is continuing to evolve, with a new tongue-in-cheek “smoked hemp” gin hitting shelves this month. To encourage more tourists to try something new, the company has also launched a one-day self-guided food and beverage cycle trail through the TrailsWA app; distillery.com.au; trailswa.com.au.

03 Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse is attracting renewed attention after more than \$1 million was spent on extensive renovations and a new observation platform. The lighthouse may stand only 20m high, but its position on the cape, 123m above sea level, and the timber platform at its base make it a lofty destination for whale watching. Take a guided tour (\$15) to the top of the still-operating lighthouse then head down to the new cafe inside the restored lighthouse keeper’s cottage. It is a wonderful throwback to the 1900s, with period furniture styled in a way that encourages you to pull up a floral armchair and play one of the many board games supplied on tables and bookshelves. The grounds also have a new visitors’ shop with a great range of nautical-inspired giftware, along with an understated playground. More plans are in the pipeline, too, with another keeper’s cottage being readied for use as an interpretative centre; margaretriver.com.

04 If you love to shop local, be sure to call into the new Margaret River Collaborative. Located on the main street of “Margs”, as locals call the region’s namesake town, this is a store housing wares from various local artisans and small business people. From spicy chai loose-leaf tea and unprocessed jarrah honey to crochet wall hangings, you’re bound to find a unique souvenir. In the back corner, there are also a couple of tables to take a break and order a coffee from Collaborative co-owner Sam Badger. Or sample a few wines at Urban Cellar Door, a mini Domaine Natu-

raliste tasting area set up inside the store. The cellar door doesn’t charge for sampling; another reason to pop in; facebook.com/margaretrivercollaborative.

05 Be transported to Tuscany at Larry Cherubino Cellar Door, new to the region since November last year. The cellar door building was originally the barrel storage room for the previous Laurance Wines Estate and was closed to the public. Now visitors are

invited into a sleek kitchen-style tasting room to try some of the 62 wines produced by award-winning winemaker Larry Cherubino, best known for his riesling, chardonnay and cabernet sauvignon. You can also order a traditional Italian antipasto platter with home-baked bread, cured meats and cheese, as well as a syrupy Roman-style coffee made with Cherubino beans. Book through Experience Smith for a private tour of the top wineries, including Cherubino; larrycherubino.com; experiencesmith.com.au.

06 Take a break from touring and pull up a seat at Chow’s Table. Opened in Yallingup in May, this modern venue is all about share plates served as they’re ready, so expect a steady stream of Malay Chinese dishes reminiscent of authentic street-hawker food. The fried prawn wontons (\$13) are a great starter, while the half roast duck “Chinese style” (\$31) is an indulgent main choice, and the black sesame cake (\$14) the perfect way to finish. Open, light and minimalist in style, Chow’s Table is a stylish lunchtime choice for everyone in the family. The restaurant is so new the liquor licence is pending, so check

first or pick up a bottle at House of Cards Winery, just a skip across the lawn. Bookings recommended; facebook.com/chowstable.

07 The recently opened WA Surf Gallery at Aravina Estate in Yallingup pays homage to the region’s surfing culture. In collaboration with Surfing WA, it is the state’s only official collection of surfing memorabilia. There are more than 160 pieces on display, including surfboards dating back to the 1950s, as well as photography and trophies. Open daily, 10am-5pm; aravinaestate.com.

08 Learn about Margaret River’s indigenous heritage with Cape Cultural Tours. Aboriginal guide Josh Whiteland runs full-