

# yarra valley

Barely an hour's scenic drive from Melbourne, the Yarra Valley offers a serious foodie challenge – how to fit everything into one weekend?



The stunning **Domaine Chandon winery** was the setting for the Yarra Valley cooking elimination. But a far more relaxing way to experience all the region has to offer is to head there for a long weekend. For the right balance, mix things up with some iconic wineries, a few boutique labels and a couple of bushwalks to work up your appetite for some stellar country dining.

## what to do

It seems apt to start at **Yering Station** (38 Melba Hwy, Yarra Glen), Victoria's first vineyard. This enormous estate draws crowds for its pinot noir and shiraz viognier. The restaurant, with its floor-to-ceiling views and smart menu, is also a highlight. Shared plates on the sofas at Matt's Bar are more relaxed and easier on the wallet. Go on the third Sunday of the month for the Yarra Valley Regional Farmers' Market in the Historic Barn for goodies such as Ricci's Bikkies Turkish Breads and Cunliffe & Waters' condiments (a jar of Count Vasiliev's Russian Mustard adds punch to steaks from Little Creek Cattle Company).

**Yarra Yering Vineyard** (4 Briarty Rd, Gruyere) is a wonderful contrast from the glitzy, super-sized estates. The tasting room is an inviting mix of antique furniture, wooden barrels and Persian rugs. Sample exceptional reds including Dry Red Wine No. 2, a shiraz-based blend with viognier and marsanne; and Dry Red No. 3, a unique blend of Portugese varietals. The Potsorts is a robust fortified that would be perfect with a Christmas pud.

**Tarrowarra Estate** (311 Healesville-Yarra Glen Rd, Yarra Glen) has outstanding pinot noir and chardonnay. The estate's architecture is alone worth a detour, its cream walls striking against the green hills. Pop into **Tarrowarra Museum of Art** to see Australian landscapes by the likes of Sidney Nolan; if you go before 25 July, you'll catch the Bushfire Australia exhibition, showcasing works inspired by the 2009 tragedy. There's also a smart wine bar/cafe.

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Opposite: Greenpoint Brasserie, Domaine Chandon. Clockwise from above left: Yarra Valley Dairy Ashed Goat's Pyramid and Le Jack; Beth Williams of Hargreaves Hill Brewing Company; Greenpoint Brasserie.





For a fresh approach to winemaking, visit **Kiltynane Estate** (510 Healesville-Yarra Glen Rd, Tarrawarra).

Biodynamic winemaker Kate Kirkhope fertilises her vines with teas and manure, growing them according to lunar and solar cycles. Despite losing most of her vines in last year's bushfires, she's made three superb pinot noirs.

Another business to re-emerge from Black Saturday is **Hargreaves Hill Brewing Company** (25 Bell St, Yarra Glen). Brewer Simon Walkenhorst and partner Beth Williams operate from an 1880s former bank building. Order a tasting paddle with six lagers and ales; the ESB, with its passionfruit flavours, is a favourite. The restaurant, open for lunch daily and dinner from Monday to Saturday, features dishes such as braised sticky pork belly, and tortellini stuffed with lemon, chive and Yarra Valley Dairy goat's curd. Continue on the (um) hops trail to the relatively new White Rabbit Brewery (316 Maroondah Hwy, Healesville) to taste its complex dark ale.

**Domaine Chandon**, established by French champagne powerhouse Moët & Chandon (727 Maroondah Hwy, Coldstream), has some top-class sparklings. Its garden overlooking the vines makes a lovely setting to sip bubbly with oysters from the refurbished Greenpoint Brasserie.

Cider is another fizz on the rise. Head to **Punt Road** (10 St Huberts Ln, Coldstream) to try a crisp Napoleone & Co Apple Cider, or the recently released pear cider on tap. **Coldstream Brewery** (694 Maroondah Hwy, Coldstream) handcrafts cider from Yarra Valley apples with a traditional rack and cloth press.

**Yarra Valley Dairy** (70-80 McMeikans Rd, Yering) is an absolute must-visit. Its cow's milk Persian Fetta marinated with thyme and garlic is renowned, although Le Jack, a camembert-style of goat's cheese, is equally memorable.

On menus everywhere, you'll find 'K&W' prefixing the chocolate desserts. It's short for **Kennedy & Wilson** (203 Maroondah Hwy, Healesville). The decor of its Healesville store is just like its chocolate – dark and sleek. Take home boxes of Cats' Tongues and Autumn Leaves infused with cinnamon and pick up their new gelati line.

While in the 'hood, stock up at **Kitchen & Butcher** (258 Maroondah Hwy, Healesville) with fantastic produce from the Yarra and further afield, including ready-made meals, house-made snags and gourmet cheeses. It's owned by Healesville heroes Michael Kennedy and Kylie Balharrie of Healesville Hotel (see Where to Eat).



Harvest Bistro at Healesville Hotel. Opposite, clockwise from top left: Yarra Valley Dairy; wines from Yarra Yering; Kate Kirkhope of Kiltynane Estate; a tasting paddle of ales at Hargreaves Hill Brewing Company.



Giant Steps' chill-out area. Clockwise from above right: Harvest Café; Healesville Hotel Dining Room. Opposite: the bakery at Giant Steps.



### where to eat

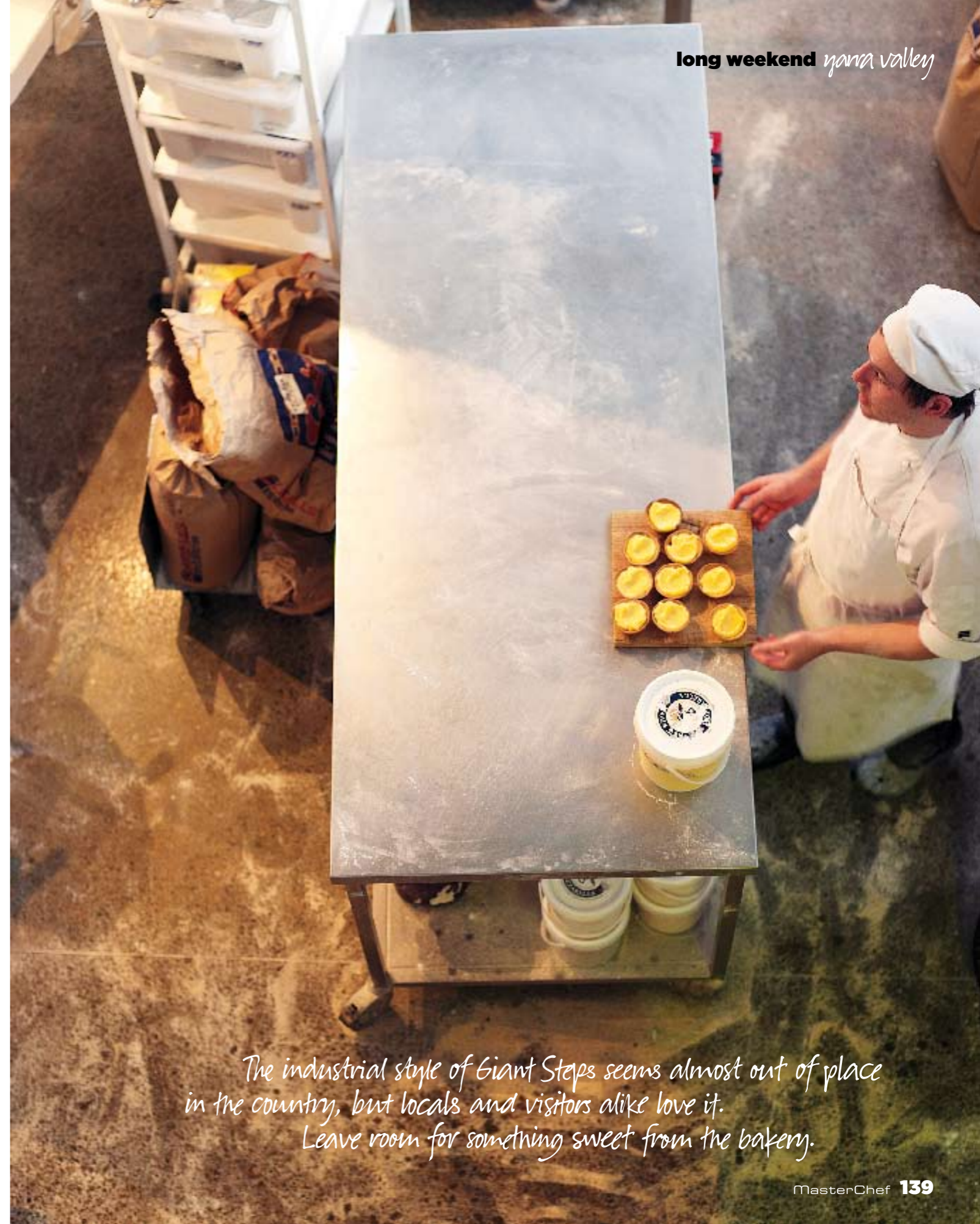
The mod-Oz menu of **Healesville Hotel Dining Room** (256 Maroondah Hwy, Healesville, (03) 5962 4002) boasts the region's best seasonal produce - think polenta-crumbed garfish with borage purée. For dessert, don't miss the K&W chocolate marquise with Pedro Ximénez-soaked strawberries. The fine wine list offers a range of reasonably priced local and international drops.

Healesville Hotel serves reliable fare at its cosy **Harvest Bistro**. Pub classics (fish and chips) and global flavours (Yeringberg lamb koftas) feature here. Add a schooner of Hargreaves Hill Pale Ale and you're sorted. The hotel's refurbished **Healesville Harvest Café** serves hearty brekkies with Kitchen & Butcher produce.

**Bella Vedere** (874 Maroondah Hwy, Coldstream, (03) 5962 6161), at Badger's Brook Winery, has former Chateau Yering double-act Gary Cooper and Tim Sawyer cooking breakfast and lunch Wednesday to Sunday; dinner Friday and Saturday. The menu changes daily, with a five-course degustation on Saturdays. You'll find Mediterranean-inspired dishes, from a rustic pissaladière to a more luxurious blue spanner crab and mussel risotto. Gary holds cooking classes on Thursdays and Fridays.

**Red Shed Café** (24-26 Medhurst Rd, Gruyere) out at Medhurst Wines is a local secret spot for lunch, especially its 'legendary' free-range chicken sandwich.

The industrial style of **Giant Steps/Innocent Bystander Bistro** (336 Maroondah Hwy, Healesville, (03) 5962 6111) seems almost out of place in the country, but locals and visitors alike love it. The cellar door, bakery, cheese room, coffee roaster and open kitchen with wood-fired oven are positively buzzing. Start with the house-baked organic sourdough, Mount Zero olive oil and salt cod brandade, then share a pumpkin, barrel-aged feta and walnut pizza. Or go for a lighter Buxton Farm smoked trout salad to leave room for something sweet from the bakery.



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## long weekend *yarra valley*

The vines of Yarra Yering and one of its fine reds (inset). Right: The sitting room at Gracedale Yarra Valley B&B. Below: Gracedale's owners, Jenny and Richard Parker.



### where to stay

At **Gracedale Yarra Valley B&B**, Richard and Jenny Parker host guests in their stylish modern bungalow situated in a prime position on 17 hectares. The plush Chocolate and Mint Suites are kitted out with king-sized beds, flat-screen TVs, DVD players, with decks and palatial spa bathrooms looking over the valley. A complimentary bottle of Chandon awaits when you check-in for the weekend, while a cooked breakfast is served in the suite or massive communal living area. Wine tours can be arranged, as well as special packages including restaurant dinners. *619 Healesville Kooweerup Rd, Healesville, (03) 5962 1248, [gracedaleyarravalley.com.au](http://gracedaleyarravalley.com.au). From \$240 per night.*

If you'd rather cook at home, **Yering Gorge Cottages** have more substantial facilities. There are 12 comfortable cottages along the banks of the Yarra – four with two bedrooms for groups or families. Nature lovers can explore the Gorge, a 45-hectare reserve, although with more than 300 kangaroos on the property, all you'll need to do is go to the front door. *215 Victoria Rd, Yering, (03) 9739 0110, [yeringcottages.com.au](http://yeringcottages.com.au). From \$259 per night.*

Traditionalists can check in to one of 10 rooms at the heritage-listed **Yarra Valley Grand Hotel**. The Melba Suite, named for opera's Dame Nellie, has a four-poster bed, while the Tower Suite has rooftop access. The bistro with beer garden serves pub gems like chicken parmigiana and beef vindaloo. *19 Bell St, Yarra Glen, (03) 9730 1230, [yarravalleygrand.com.au](http://yarravalleygrand.com.au). From \$155 per night.* 

