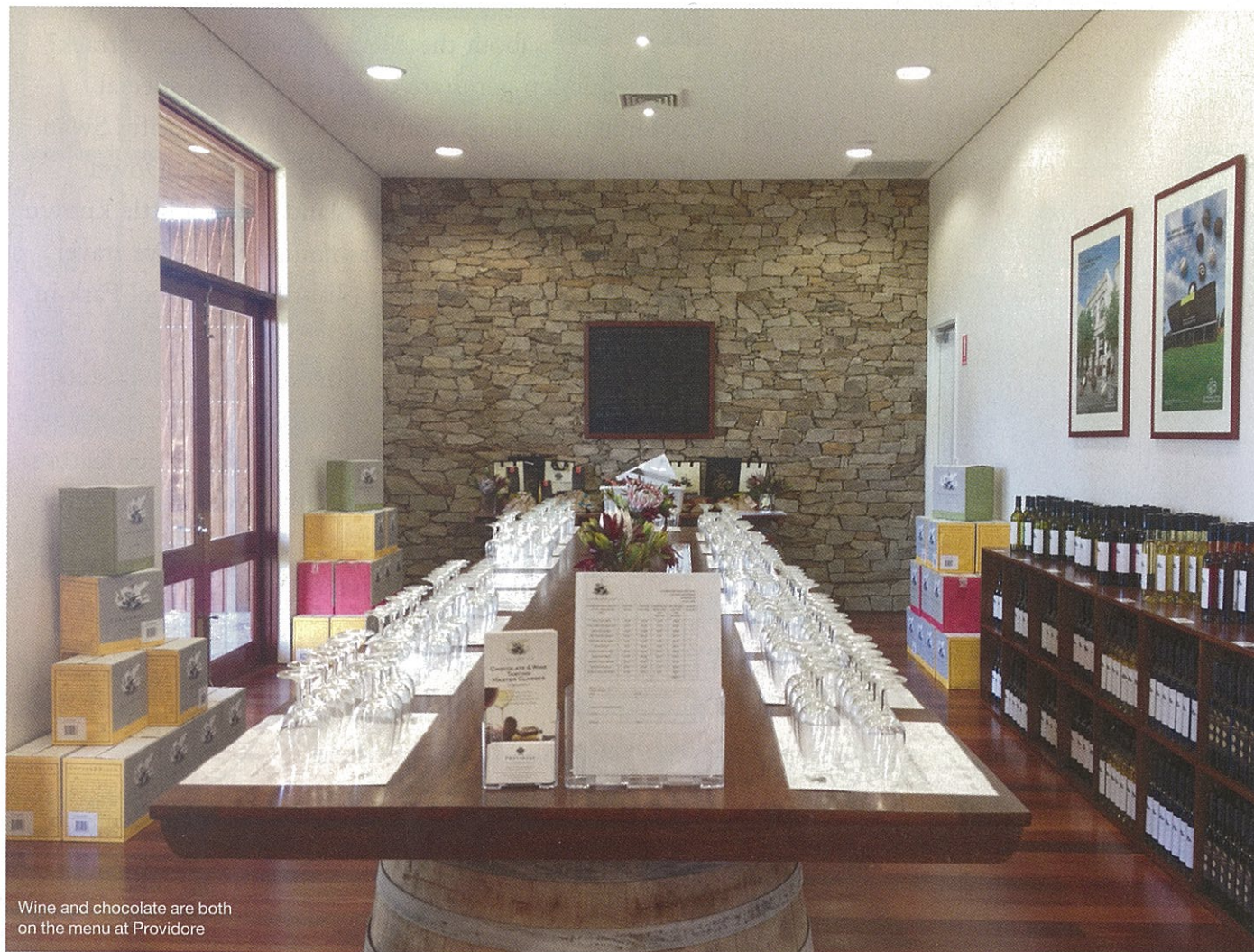


VALLEY OF TASTE

Between the food, the drink and the warm Aussie hospitality, Western Australia's Swan Valley will steal your heart, writes **Casey Ewars**



Wine and chocolate are both on the menu at Providore

It's one of Western Australia's best-kept secrets and it's literally on Perth's doorstep! A mere 25 minute drive from Perth's CBD you'll find yourself surrounded by grape vines and immersed in wine and food heaven in Perth's Valley of Taste – The Swan Valley.

This year marks 180 years of winemaking in the Swan Valley. It is the oldest wine region in Western Australia and one of the oldest in Australia, plus it is the nation's closest urban wine region.

Home to roughly 40 wineries, some are family owned and operate out of a shed,

with other's housed in grand estates. Wine tasting is free of charge at most of the wineries, otherwise a small fee may be charged which can often be refunded on purchase.

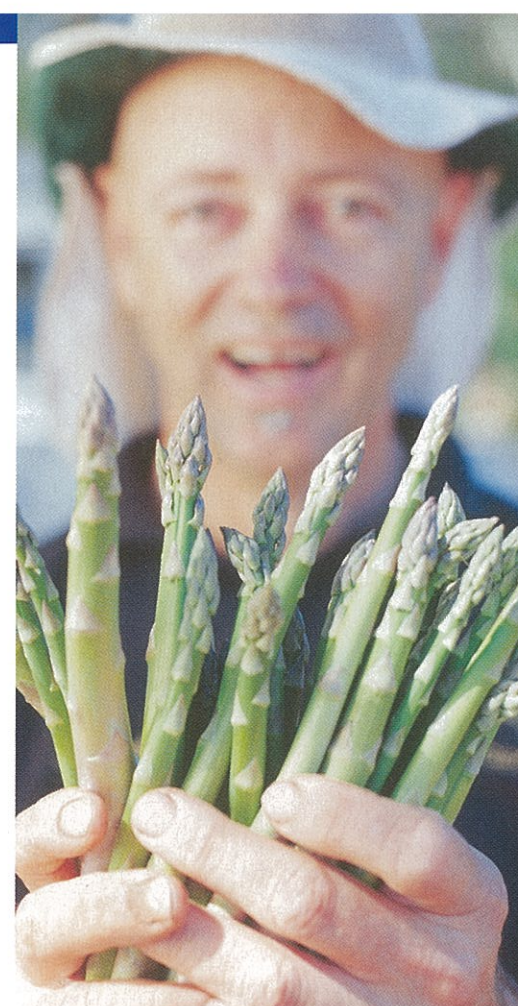
Wine and food aren't the only things along the 32-kilometre tasting loop. There are microbreweries, chocolate factories, cafés, art galleries and more!

One of my favourite aspects about the Swan Valley is the fun, interactive experiences offered at many of the venues. World-class culinary experiences with an educational twist are something every

modern tourist craves. Whether you want to spend some time in the kitchen learning to make haloumi or brie at The Cheese Barrel or become a coffee expert at a Yahava Koffee barista class, your friends back home will be envious of your holiday experiences!

DIVINE CHOCOLATE

One of my favourite experiences in the Swan Valley is the Wine and Chocolate Master Class at Providore. Not only does this cellar door boast an enviable selection of chutneys, preserves, vinaigrettes,



liqueurs and wine to taste, but every morning this tantalising class runs at a cost of A\$30 (£16) per person. Try four chocolate liqueurs, six wines and nine chocolates, and you'll get a bottle of your favourite chocolate liqueur to take home. This is an absolute bargain!

Coward and Black Vineyards, along with their sister company, the Margaret River Chocolate Company are the tasty companies behind this incredible 30 minutes of your life.

Not only do you get to eat and drink your way to pure happiness but you'll also take away a stomach full of new knowledge on all things chocolate and wine. I won't spill the cacao beans too much but you will learn about the all-important chocolate 'pop'.

I was shocked to see how much was included in the tasting, I was expecting a handful of chocolate and a couple of wines, but no, make that 10 items to sip and nine chocolates to melt in your mouth. I actually had to get a little bag to put half my chocolates in, as I couldn't get through them all.

We started with the four chocolate liqueurs; the original, hazelnut, macchiato and the mint chocolate liqueur. Each one was so chocolaty and scrumptious that I knew the decision of choosing my favourite was going to be a tough choice. The difference with these chocolate



Left, going crazy for asparagus at Edgecombe Brothers Winery, and (below) getting a taste for the sweet stuff at The House of Honey



"YOU'LL TAKE AWAY A STOMACH FULL OF NEW KNOWLEDGE ON ALL THINGS CHOCOLATE AND WINE"

liqueurs is that the chocolate is in your face and the alcohol hits you subtly at the end. The chocolates and wines were all matched impeccably well. Who would have thought white wine and chocolate are a match made in heaven?

ASPARAGUS SEASON

For something a 'bit' more diet friendly in the Swan Valley, you have to have your

timing right. That my friend is timing for the asparagus season, which is September to December. It is the annual Asparagus Master Class run by the legends of asparagus growing in the Swan Valley – Edgecombe Brothers Winery.

Three hours devoted to asparagus? It may sound a little weird or a little crazy but it can be done and it's actually very enjoyable. The morning starts with >>