

Admiring the cheese selection at The Cheese Barrel



tea and coffee and freshly made ANZAC biscuits (sweet biscuits made with rolled oats, coconut and golden syrup – it's an Aussie and New Zealander thing), which went down a treat.

Alf Edgecombe was our fearless asparagus leader who we would spend the following three hours with. Alf is extremely knowledgeable, not only on the cultivation of asparagus but on the area and the history of the Swan Valley.

After finishing our coffees and chatting, Alf then took us over to one of the asparagus fields on the property. We were armed with yellow buckets and Ikea knives, ready to muck in and collect some tasty delights for our lunch. After a short demonstration by Alf, we were let loose

on the asparagus and before we knew it, we had filled up most of the buckets and had worked up an appetite. The brave munched on a few spears of fresh asparagus – they tasted like peas in a pod!

We then made our way back to the winery to sit under the beautiful purple and white wisteria to enjoy a wine tasting with freshly baked bread, olives, cheese, dukkah, olive oil, balsamic and some ultra delicious tapenade.

After snacking and getting into full relaxation mode we then proceeded to learn how to prepare and cook asparagus to perfection. I'm no Jamie Oliver but Alf made it so easy and delicious that I spent at least a week eating asparagus for dinner every night.

The freshly cooked asparagus was topped with parmesan. The table went silent. You know the food and wine are good when all you can hear is everyone munching and slurping.

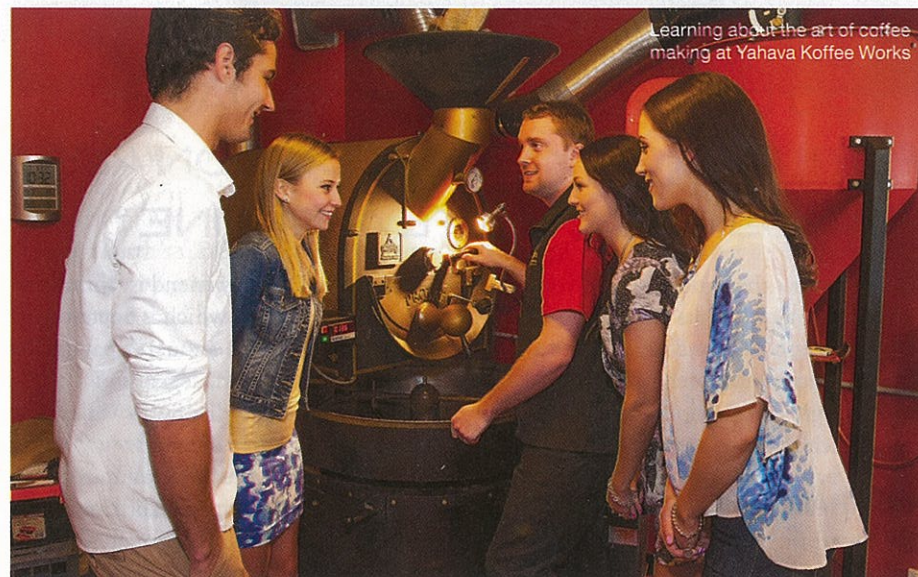
Once we were finished we were then brought some fortifieds to sample (which the Swan Valley is famous for) and chocolate covered figs! Here I was preparing for a light lunch and I think I spent most of the time eating.

It was enlightening to experience something so unique and fresh. At the end of the class we were given a 250-gram pack of asparagus each and a bunch of recipes to take home and put our new skills to use.

At A\$50 (£27) per person for a midweek class and A\$60 (£33) per person for a weekend class it was good value. A great class for foodies, winos, green thumbs and anyone up for a delicious taste of craziness!

The Swan Valley will steal your heart, between the food, the drink and the warm Aussie hospitality – you really can't go wrong. 2014 is a fantastic year to visit, the vibe is absolutely buzzing with the 180 years of winemaking milestone being celebrated all year long...

■ Casey Ewers blogs about the eating and drinking holes along the Swan Valley Food and Wine Trail at travellingcorkscrew.com/the-swan-valley. For further information about the Swan Valley visit swanvalley.com.au.



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