

VINTAGE SYDNEY

The Hawkesbury's wine flows strongly on the fringes of the city



WINSOR DOBBIN

SYDNEY residents are better known for their love of consuming wine than for producing it, but the nation's largest city has a long wine history - with the first vines in the country planted near the site of what is now the InterContinental Hotel. Those vines arrived in Australia in 1788 with Captain Phillip on board one of the ships of the First Fleet and were planted at Farm Cove, although they failed to thrive.

John Macarthur established a vineyard at his property, Elizabeth Farm, at Parramatta, in 1793 and the wine industry really got started when James Busby's collection of vines arrived in Sydney on board the Camden in January 1833. Since then the wine industry in Sydney has had something of a roller-coaster ride.

While central Sydney land is far too valuable for the planting of grapes, a viable wine industry has recently grown up north-west

of the city - and the food and wine of the Hawkesbury region was showcased at a function at New South Wales Parliament House last November.

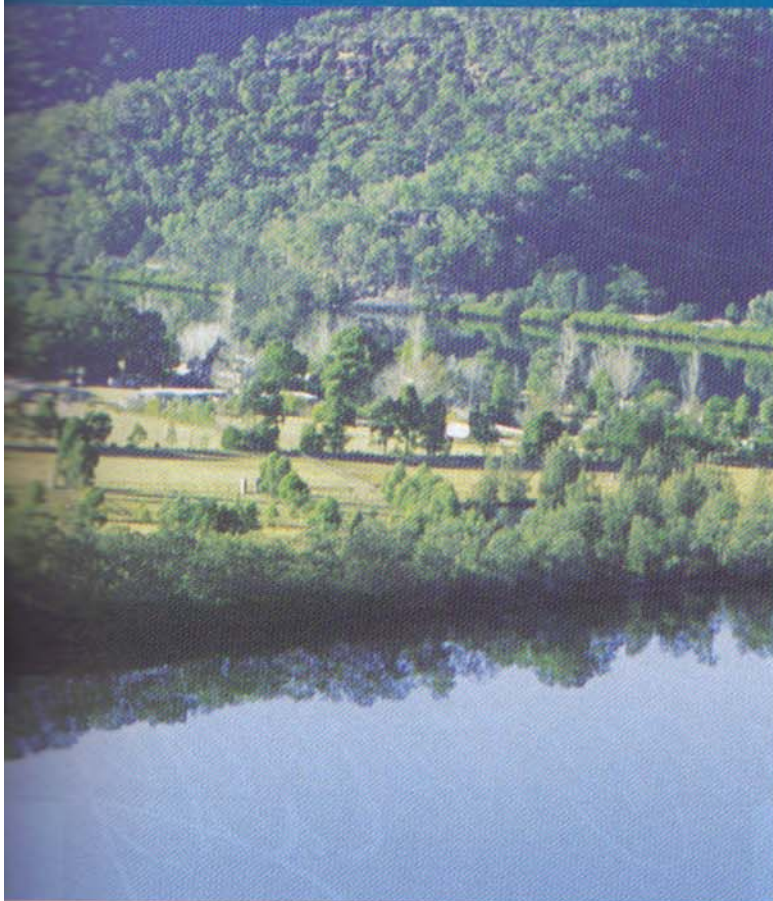
Jojo's Jetty/Colo River Wines, Jubilee Vineyard, Talai, Tizzana and Vicary's are all wineries operating within the greater Sydney region.

The NSW Member for Riverstone, John Aquilina, is a huge supporter of regional wines and says November's week-long showcase "highlighted the quality and diversity of food and wine in the Hawkesbury region to key influencers, and promoted regional tourism, business and investment".


He described the Hawkesbury as historically a food bowl for Sydney, dating back to the time of Governor Macquarie when the settlement at Sydney Cove turned to the Hawkesbury as a vital food source. "Today the region continues to provide a dynamic food and

Main photo: Hawkesbury River Valley (courtesy of Tourism NSW). Inset: Hawkesbury Food & Wine Function. Opposite page: Tizzana winery (courtesy of Tourism NSW).

HAWKESBURY REGION WINERIES



wine culture and is strongly supported through the efforts of the local Hawkesbury Harvest group," he said. "The Hawkesbury Food and Wine Showcase provided industry figures with a taste of the region's best produce, but I also encourage Sydney residents to take the time to visit this great destination on Sydney's doorstep."

The showcase followed on the heels of the work done by the Hawkesbury Harvest organisation, which has been a driving force in reawakening awareness of the importance of agriculture in the Sydney Basin and bringing fresh food and wine closer to the consumer. There are even moves to have the Hawkesbury recognised as an official appellation. 

THE LEADING WINERIES IN THE HAWKESBURY REGION INCLUDE:

JO JO'S JETTY/COLO RIVER VALLEY WINES

Jo Jo's Jetty vineyard, beside the Colo River, has semillon, shiraz and merlot vines. It was established in 2000 and is fully irrigated but the owners are keen to remain a boutique operation. Wines are sold in several Sydney restaurants, including Kables and Longrain and by mail order. See <www.jojosjetty.com.au>.

JUBILEE VINEYARD ESTATE

This estate is located on Tizzana Lagoon, near the Hawkesbury River, less than 90 minutes from the centre of Sydney. Italian doctor Thomas Fiaschi purchased land at Sackville Reach and established a vineyard and winery in 1885, calling it Tizzana as it reminded him of his village on the outskirts of Florence, Italy. The property was destroyed by bushfire in 1950 and later subdivided but was re-established in 2001, directly in front of the Tizzana winery. Jubilee Vineyard today specialises in chambourcin, which is made in three different styles. See <www.jubileevineyard.com.au>.

TALAI ESTATE WINERY

This boutique winery on Wisemans Ferry Rd at South Maroota grows chardonnay, semillon and pinot noir. Owners David and Eleanor Moss work the vineyards and make the wine in a beautiful rural setting. Phone (02) 4572 8493.

TIZZANA WINERY

Situated on the Hawkesbury River, the Auld family's Tizzana property has its own vineyard and olive grove, and a cellar door facility, as well as offering food and accommodation. The winery traces its roots back to 1885 and the building, constructed in 1887, is one of the most outstanding in the Windsor district. Vineyards were re-established in 1979 and grapes grown include shiraz, cabernet sauvignon, petit verdot and aleatico. The cellar door also sells olives, verjus and preserves. See <www.tizzana.com.au>.

VICARY'S WINERY

Established in 1923 on the Northern Rd in Luddenham, Vicary's has been making wines for over 80 years. The winery has the largest production capacity in the Sydney basin with an annual crush of 250 tonnes. Vicary's produce a large range from vintage whites and reds to fortified wines, with plantings of semillon, chardonnay, shiraz, cabernet sauvignon and merlot. Vicary's has also made Kosher wines for the Jewish market. See <www.vicaryswinery.com.au>

Other Sydney wine labels include Buckenbah, which has vines on the banks of the Colo River. Wines are vinified at the University of Western Sydney (Richmond Campus) by Geoff Skurray; Glenorie Estate's grapes are grown at Glenorie, near Dural, and distributed by Tizzana; and San Pedro Vineyard, on the Hawkesbury near Windsor, produces wines made from chambourcin.