

COVER STORY

HIGH AND MIGHTY



ONLINE TASTE PLANNER

Plan, shop and cook with ease



THE BIG READ

# BRIGHT IDEAS



**DO THIS**  
The annual Feast High Country Festival starts on Friday and runs until May 19. With more than 40 food events held across the northeast, there's hands-on classes, dinners, village bonfires and more to, yes, feast on.

FULL PROGRAM  
FEASTHIGHCOUNTRY.COM.AU



BILLY BUTTON WINES



REED & CO DISTILLERY

**OTHER TOP SPOTS**



**\* WANDI PUB**  
Boasting one of the best beer gardens in the state, the Wandi is a top spot for a feed — the smoked duck congee is a knockout — and a cool crafty brew. It's no secret this is one heck of a country pub.  
thewandipub.com

**\* MT BUFFALO OLIVES**  
Colin and Elisa Bertuch have been making award-winning olive oil from their grove at the base of Mt Buffalo for almost two decades. Drop in to taste the range and pick up some olives to eat and oils to drizzle for home.  
mtbuffaloolives.com.au



**\* BRIGHT BREWERY**  
Come for a beer, stay for a pizza and don't forget a six-pack to go. The Bright Brewery is a bustling behemoth for very good reason. The beers are great, the welcome is warm and the food easy pleasing.  
brightbrewery.com.au

**\* FEATHERTOP**  
A pioneer of alternative varieties in the Alpine Valley, what started as a one-man operation by Kel Boynton has grown into a multifaceted operation — part cellar, part retail outlet, part terrace restaurant. Add on-site accommodation and you have a one-stop spot for an impressive getaway.  
feathertop.net.au

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When he's not distilling, Hamish is tending the red gum-fired grill on which a range of snacks and share plates are cooked. Following a similar local-produce-simply-treated ethos employed at Tani to such acclaim, cured meats and marinated olives might precede local trout or aged beef on the grill, with Remedy and other gins, or local wine, to go with. Open from Friday through Monday for gin tastings and cocktails and food.

**• Reed & Co Distillery, 15 Wills St, Bright, reedandcodistillery.com**

COOL COFFEE

Sharing the same space as Reed & Co is Sixpence Roastery,



MARK & JULIE HOLM / RINGER REEF

making the Wills St site a double act of deliciousness — coffee and pastries by day, gins and tonic and food-fired fare at night.

"We are a really, really spoilt regional town, it's evolved so much," says owner Luke Dudley who moved to Bright nine years ago. Seeing a need in the northeast for good coffee he

started Sixpence 4½ years ago, first roasting and serving from a warehouse in Bright's industrial area.

Now in the centre of town, the roastery and cafe serves locals, the Lycra'd and the laze-over-papers alike, while the original Churchill Ave site is now the home of Luke's sourdough bakery, A Pocket Full of Rye. Open weekdays, the bakery has sourdough loaves and pastries and, now, pizzas on Fridays for lunch — and coffee, of course.

**• Sixpence Coffee, 15 Wills St, Bright, sixpencecoffee.com.au**  
**• A Pocket Full of Rye, 35 Churchill Ave, Bright, pocketfullofrye.com.au**

WILD WINES

"If you want to try different wines, come here. Word gets around that we're doing things differently," says winemaker Jo Marsh who, since 2014, has been championing alternative varieties and the Alpine Valley through her Billy Button label. Never sipped a saperavi or slurped a schioppettino? Fancy trying a fiano or friulano? Head

"It was a retirement village, now it's booming"

NICK TOY ON HIS BELOVED BRIGHT

to the Billy Button cellar door in town to taste them and 22 other varieties of wine, which are offered by the glass and bottle.

"My intention from the get go was to produce wines that promoted the Alpine region," Jo says, who moved to the area and worked at Feathertop for a couple of years before setting up Billy Button.

While chardonnay and riesling remain popular, Jo says adventurous drinkers are seeking out the region to experience new wines they've never tried. "People love coming in to try varieties they haven't heard of before."

With a cabinet full of salumi — emu and kangaroo salami; wayu bresola — and local and imported cheeses to go with your glass of arneis or malvasia, the cellar door offers a delicious education in alternative Alpine wines.

**• Billy Button Wines, 11 Camp St, Bright, billybuttonwines.com.au**

GOOD TIMES

"People say it's like something they'd find in Melbourne, which is a real compliment, I guess," says Kurt Adam of Tomahawks, his beer-buns-

and-fun-times joint. Opening 2½ years ago as a single-fronted 45-seater, the formula of cool brews and on-trend burgers and easy-pleasing share plates proved so popular they had to extend — first into the store next door, and then over Christmas, increasing the footpath to cater to all fresco feasters.

With quirky ephemera, good tunes, a fridge full of interesting beers and a bar filled with spirits that get shaken and stirred into cool concoctions — and a mighty fine cheeseburger — it's easy to see why Tomahawks has been such a hit with locals and interlopers alike, day through night.

**• Tomahawks, 15 Camp St, Bright, tomahawksbright.com.au**

TOP DROPS

With its unbeatable views of the Buckland Valley and Mt Buffalo beyond, there are few better spots to while away an afternoon than on Ringer Reef's sun-drenched lawns. A small winery that's very much a family affair, the vineyard was planted 21 years ago by Bruce and Annie Holm. And while they are still charged with tending the vines, it's now son Mark and his wife Julie — both qualified winemakers — who tend to the winemaking and cellar door. Drop in to try the range of 12 varieties grown on site — many of them Italians — grab a glass of your favourite and enjoy with a tasting platter of local produce and the



THREE PEAKS CHEESE

housemade sourdough.

**• Ringer Reef, 6835 Great Alpine Rd, Porepunkah, ringerreef.com.au**

FINE FEED

Emma Handley (Villa Gusto, Astra Falls Creek) has transformed a gloriously creaky old Masonic lodge just outside Mt Beauty into the northeast's



RACHEL REED, HAMISH NUGENT & DAUGHTER / REED & CO DISTILLERY



WANDIFUL PRODUCE

winter. Luke's partner Vanesa Lipscombe runs the cafe and makes the most of local produce, which she trades coffee for excess produce with locals and then writes the blackboard menu accordingly. Leeks and chillies from Dod, lemons and eggs from Gay, Angela's pumpkins and Ingrid's figs are all transformed into warming soups and terrific tarts, while Three Peaks cheese turns up in toastie, platter and baked-until-oozy form.

**• Wandiful Produce, 795 Morses Creek Rd, Wandiligong**

PUNKA TUCKA

Janelle Boynton from Feathertop Winery down the road joined forces with another local family to save the historic Porepunkah Pub. They gave it a sleek industrial-cool makeover, spruced up the accommodation and reopened a couple of years back to the cheers of locals and bike-riding rail trailers.

With classic meals on the menu — panko-crumbed schnitzels, a couple of steaks and a few burgers — a fridge full of local wines and beer taps that range from the smashable to the sip and savour, this is a smart country pub.

**• The Punka Pub, 13 Nicholson St, Porepunkah, porepunkahpub.com.au**

Dan Stock travelled courtesy of Tourism North East

SAY CHEESE

Wandiful Produce is a small biodynamic chestnut and hazelnut farm on the outskirts of Wandiligong and while many come in season for the pick-your-own nuts, more recently it's cheese-lovers who are making their way to the wonderfully rustic shed café. For its here you'll find — and can taste — the Three Peaks range of farmhouse-style French cheeses made by Luke Armstrong.

Just six months old, Three Peaks has four in the range, two goats milk cheeses — a ripe, oozy Cloulet and the Monolith dusted in ash — and two cows' milk cheeses, one soft, one hard, with plans to add a raclette-style cheese in time for



BAKED CHICKPEA & EDAMAME FALAFELS

prep / 15 minutes cook / 25 minutes

½ cup frozen shelled edamame  
¼ cup pistachios  
400g can chickpeas, rinsed, drained  
1 garlic clove, peeled  
1 tsp ground coriander  
1 tsp ground cumin  
1 lemon, rind finely grated, juiced  
½ cup fresh mint leaves  
1 small red onion, thinly sliced  
Wholemeal pita bread, to serve  
Hummus, to serve  
Natural yoghurt, to serve  
Salad leaves, to serve  
Sliced tomato, to serve

cumin, lemon rind, mint and half the onion in a food processor. Season. Process until coarsely chopped. Add 1 tbsp lemon juice and process until the mixture just starts to come together. Add another 1 tbsp lemon juice, if needed, then a little water if it needs more liquid to come together.

**1** Preheat oven to 220C/200C fan forced. Grease and line a baking tray. Place the edamame in a heatproof bowl. Pour over enough boiling water to cover and set aside for 5 minutes. Drain.

**2** Place edamame, pistachios, chickpeas, garlic, coriander,

**3** Roll heaped tablespoonfuls of the mixture into balls and place on the prepared tray. Spray liberally with oil. Bake for 10 minutes. Spray again with oil and bake for a further 15–20 minutes or until golden and lightly crisp on the outside.

**4** Serve the falafels with pita, hummus, yoghurt, salad leaves, tomato and remaining onion.

RECIPE / Kerrie Ray, Taste magazine PHOTOGRAPHY / Jeremy Simons



EASY TUNA LASAGNE

serves / 6 prep / 25 minutes cook / 55 minutes

1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
1 brown onion, finely chopped  
2 zucchini, coarsely chopped  
1 red capsicum, deseeded, coarsely chopped  
2 garlic cloves, crushed  
400g can diced tomatoes  
250ml (1 cup) passata  
1 tsp oregano leaves  
Large pinch of sugar  
425g can tuna in oil, drained, flaked into large pieces  
500g smooth ricotta  
1 lemon, rind finely grated  
1 egg, lightly whisked  
200g (2 cups) grated three cheese blend (see note)  
5-6 fresh lasagne sheets  
½ cup fresh continental parsley leaves

**2** Stir in the tomato, passata, oregano and sugar. Season. Add the tuna and gently fold to combine.

**3** Combine the ricotta, lemon rind and egg in a bowl. Season with salt and stir until smooth. Add half the grated cheese.

**4** Cover the base of the prepared dish with a layer of lasagne sheets, trimming to fit. Spread one-third of the tuna mixture over, then top with another layer of lasagne sheets. Repeat with the remaining tuna mixture and lasagne sheets, finishing with a layer of lasagne sheets.

**5** Spread the ricotta mixture over the top of the lasagne. Sprinkle with parsley leaves and the remaining grated cheese. Bake for 40–45 minutes or until golden. Set aside for 10 minutes to cool slightly before serving.

**1** Preheat oven to 190°C/170°C fan forced. Lightly grease a 19 x 25cm (base measurement) baking dish. Heat the oil in a large, deep frying pan over medium heat. Add the onion, zucchini and capsicum. Cook, stirring often, for 5 minutes or until soft. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, for 1 minute or until aromatic.

**NOTE / You'll get the best result with a blend of cheddar, mozzarella and parmesan. Alternatively, use grated cheddar instead.**

RECIPE / Tracy Rutherford, taste.com.au PHOTOGRAPHY / Guy Bailey



THE POREPUNKAH PUB