

Snuffling up a truffle treat for creative cook-off



On the hunt: Owner of Lower Mount Truffiere, Col Roberts, with his truffle dogs Morris and Floyd and at left holding a black perigord truffle. The creations from the chefs included gnocchi with cauliflower, asparagus, chestnuts and truffles (far left) and, below, bruschetta with local mushrooms and truffles.

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The region's leading executive chefs came together to search for, sample and cook with truffles as part of a Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise (BMEE) program to position the Blue Mountains as a top quality foodie destination.

The chefs, including Darley's Lee Kwiez, Fairmont Resort MGallery's John Slaughter, the Hyatt Regency Hotel's Mate Herczeg and Jason Martin from Emirates Wolgan Valley Resort, enjoyed their time together out of the kitchen and looking at the highly regarded truffle in a new light.

It was the first of a series of educational tours to be rolled out by BMEE's local food industry development project for hospitality and kitchen staff to coincide with the opening of the truffle season at Lowes Mount Truffiere in Oberon.

The trips are designed to improve regional food knowledge amongst hospitality professionals.

"We know that more than 60 per cent of tourists to the Blue Mountains indicate food experience as their most desirable activity," BMEE's chief executive officer Jacqueline Brinkman said.

"Research shows that good food and wine and local produce was a key factor in holiday decision-making, ranking ahead of world class beauty and natural environments."

Food industry development officer Carencia Harris said: "When chefs and hospitality staff are knowledgeable about regional produce, this can lead to better quality menus and improved customer service in local cafes and restaurants."

"These tours are designed to give staff that first-hand knowledge and experience," Ms Harris said.

"The chefs on the tour participated in the harvesting of truffles and learned how the delicacies are cleaned and graded for sale at markets and for use in the best kitchens."

"The chefs split into two teams for a cook off using the fresh truffles, then sat down to enjoy them with wines sponsored by Western Regional Wines.

"As a result of this tour we can expect to see more truffle-based dishes on local menus, cooked



and served by staff who are able to tell customers the provenance of each dish.

"Future tours for chefs and hospitality staff will see visits to farms producing a range of produce and meats across the Blue Mountains, Lithgow, Mudgee and Orange regions."

The group was driven by Fantastic Aussie Tours' Jason Cronshaw to Fabrice Rolando's farm in Hartley Vale, First Farm Organics.

BMEE is rolling out more industry development initiatives, including a food industry networking night on June 23 and a series of workshops aimed at cafe, restaurant and hotel managers and owners.