



Luxury by the Lake

From humble beginnings in 1984, Daylesford's multi-award winning Lake House has become a favourite sanctuary for Porsche owners.

By Michael Browning
Photos by Ellen Dewar/Eclipse Images

When Allan and Alla Wolf-Tasker in 1983 applied for permission to open a small 40-seater weekend-only restaurant in Daylesford, they were told the sleepy and sparsely settled Victorian spa town simply didn't need it. "Council said Daylesford already had two restaurants—a Milk Bar and a Fish & Chip shop," recalled Allan, "and they couldn't foresee the demand for anything more!" But the Wolf-Taskers persisted and gained reluctant approval the following year.

Today, that original restaurant with its limited fixed price menu has trebled in size to a 120-seat multi award-winning a la carte gastronomic experience that currently boasts a total of 47 Chefs Hats in *The Age Good Food Guide*, along with numerous other local and international food and wine accolades. Moreover, it is now much more than just one of the best places in Australia to eat outside the major capital cities. As part of the Lake House Small Luxury Hotel complex, its attractions have mushroomed to include 33 suites and rooms, plus the Salus Spa, added in 2004. It was the mineral water springs of the Daylesford area, now just one hour's drive from Melbourne Airport,



People have been coming to Daylesford for more than 150 years to "take the waters" in an area that boasts Australia's largest collection of Mineral Springs. Today they can enjoy the same therapeutic benefits in luxury at the Salus Spa at the Lake House

Porsches and their owners are familiar visitors to Daylesford's Lake House, Event Manager Danny Kane greets Porsche Centre Melbourne's Austin King as he arrives to arrange lunch for participants in a Porsche Driving the Range programme

that originally attracted the Wolf-Taskers to the region.

Alla's family were amongst the many Post War migrants drawn to visit the former gold mining area, where they enjoyed the largest concentration of naturally occurring mineral springs in Australia. And true to their Russian heritage, they had a small dacha, or summer house, in Daylesford. After meeting Allan, who was the principal of a creative arts school in Melbourne, they decided to move to the area and purchased a run-down cottage overlooking a reedy lake and a field dotted with rusting car bodies.

Allan Wolf-Tasker is Lake House's co-founder, managing director and artist in residence. Behind him is his rendition of the property today, some 23 years and many additions after he and his wife Alla built it from a rundown shack

Photo below: One of the most striking of Allan Wolf-Tasker's many paintings exhibited in Lake House is his tongue-in-cheek Rousseau's *Sleeping Chef*, painted in the style of French Impressionist Henri Rousseau's well-known 1997 work, *The Sleeping Gypsy*, but instead featuring his wife, Alla



It took three years of part-time building before they were able to open the doors of Lake House, but Alla's French-trained culinary skills and a good revue in *The Age Good Food Guide* soon gave their little restaurant cult status with a solid and growing group of clients.

At that stage Daylesford was well known for its waters, but little else. "You could shoot a cannon down the main street without hitting anyone," Allan said. "Visitors either left at night or stayed in little rented miner's huts." Today the historic town of Daylesford offers visitors over 3000 beds, while 300 registered masseurs deliver a taste of well-being to tens of thousands of visitors from around Australia and overseas each year.

A lot of Daylesford's rise to prominence can be linked directly to the Lake House, for with Alla's insistence on using quality local produce, a village market culture has grown up around the restaurant, with scores of local producers now famous Australia-wide for delicacies ranging from smoked eels to terrines and thick, rich and fruity jams. "The key to a regional restaurant is that your food doesn't travel," explained Alla. "Food rules here and what isn't made in house comes from only a few kilometres away."

Combine that food culture with a 10,000-bottle cellar for which *Wine Spectator* magazine awarded its "Best Award of Excellence" and a beautiful sprawling property set in 2.4 hectares of manicured gardens extending down to the waters of Lake Daylesford and you can see why Lake House has become a favourite retreat for many Porsche owners over the years. Porsche Centre Melbourne has introduced many to its culinary and holistic charms, as the restaur-



Lake House boasts an impressive 10,000-bottle cellar that has earned it many International wine industry awards. Here, resident Sommelier Danny Kane (right) and Porsche Centre Melbourne's Austin King sample something suitable for a planned Porsche customer function



rant has been a frequently used lunchtime destination for customers participating in Driving the Range programmes over a number of years. As you'd expect from its topography, the surrounding roads in the hills north west of Melbourne are drivers' delights and lunch in the sunny Lake House restaurant is the perfect reward after an exhilarating Journey.

Many Porsches and some excellent food have been thoroughly tested on such occasions, however the full enjoyment of the Lake House cellar has usually had to await a return visit. When they do, whether for a long, lingering lunch, a weekend break or maybe a full week's pampering and relaxation, Porsche owners find themselves looked after by a team of 85 "extended family members"—all committed to operating one of Australia's best retreats.

Although the property has grown far beyond its founders' original dreams, it retains the feel of a small and very personal family hotel. Lake House is still owned and operated by the Wolf-Tasker family, with Alla remaining Executive Chef, Allan as Managing Director and residential artist and their daughter Larissa, who grew up in hospitality working front of house both at Lake House and other Melbourne restaurants, now responsible for its local and international marketing.

The family touch is everywhere, from the moment you step through the front door. Allan Wolf-Tasker is a successful and prolific artist, who still stages exhibitions and paints on commission and his distinctive and colourful works in oil and acrylic adorn most of the restaurant walls. One of the most striking of these exhibited in the dining room and also featured on the restaurant's menu cover, is his picture of his re-

clining wife titled *Rousseau's Sleeping Chef*, painted in the style of French impressionist Henri Rousseau's well-known 1997 work, *The Sleeping Gypsy*. Meanwhile Alla planted most of the deciduous trees that now flourish on the property and still oversees the restaurant's menu in conjunction with Head Chef Matthew McCartney.

The future for the Lake House and Daylesford remains as rich as the gold mining days of the 19th century that originally brought the area to notice internationally. "The restaurant's reputation is now making Daylesford a destination on the itinerary of more tourists each year,"

Allan explained. "And because the area is thriving as a result of all the cottage industries that it has helped to generate, we are getting a lot of repeat visitation because there is now much more to do once you are here."

The final twist in the tale is that with its proximity to major cities like Melbourne and Ballarat, many people are now purchasing either homes or holiday cottages in the Daylesford area as part of a "tree change". "People love to know and have a relationship with local suppliers," Alla added. "It's a romantic, nostalgic view of the country that drew us here more than 20 years ago and it still exists today." 4

Lake House entrances visitors with an eclectic blend of interesting art and fine food and wine



Fresh local produce, imaginatively served, is the signature of Lake House. It's a formula that has earned the Daylesford restaurant a total of 47 Chefs Hats in *The Age Good Food Guide*



Porsche Christophorus 321

Porsche in Australia and New Zealand

Contents:

Luxury by the Lake

From humble beginnings in 1984, Daylesford's multi-award winning Lake House has become a favourite sanctuary for Porsche owners.

Simply the Best

Never, ever, underestimate Jim Richards at the wheel of a Porsche.

Class of 56

You don't need to leave Porsche standards of performance, technology and 24/7 availability behind when you step off the quay.

Daily Driver

Porsche's legendary quad cam models have a reputation of being fast, but fussy. Not Trevor Hudson's unique and rare 1958 356 Carrera.

Baird's Blitz

New Zealand's Craig Baird takes command of the 2006 Australian Carrera Cup.

Closing the GAP

Now, there are three unique new insurance products for Porsche owners.

Daylesford's iconic Lake House is an imaginative and award winning country restaurant, boutique hotel and spa retreat regularly frequented by Porsches and their owners



The following pages provide information on the Australian and New Zealand markets. Porsche Cars Australia is responsible for both picture and text.