



For immediate release

Australia-first initiative said to be 'vital' to regional Victoria

Despite consumer demand for local produce and wine at what appears to be all time high, research shows many producers and growers in Victoria are struggling with increasing costs and static visitor spend*.

With many hit by the Black Saturday fires, recovering from the global economic downturn, and with a cluttered and competitive market, life hasn't been easy for some producers in regional Victoria; compounded by having limited, if any, marketing budgets or ability to reach a wider audience.

But, an Australia-first initiative, already touted as vital to regional producers, is about to do its part to change that.

In a clear reflection of its on going support of regional Victoria, RACV has partnered with Australia's largest online culinary travel guide, VisitVineyards.com, to offer the more than two million members of RACV's Show Your Card and Save program access to vineyards and wineries, winery restaurants, food producers, microbreweries and related experiences in regional Victoria.

It is the first time in the history of the program this extent of food and wine products has been offered, and includes producers from more than 10 regions of Victoria – including the Mornington Peninsula, Gippsland, Yarra Valley, Geelong, Goldfields, Grampians, Great Westerns, Otways, Pyrenees, Strathbogie Ranges and North East Victoria – and it's growing.

And it's not just regional producers who are the winners.

Consumers get the opportunity to enjoy some of Victoria's best culinary and winery experiences and receive exclusive discounts.

RACV's General Manager Member and Motoring Services Gordon Oakley says he is proud to be able to extend RACV's Show Your Card and Save Program into regional Victoria.

He says the RACV Regional Wine and Food Program is an exciting initiative for RACV members.

"This is a fantastic program for our Show Your Card & Save partners and for our members who can indulge their love of good food and wine at a discounted cost.

"RACV is proud to be supporting Victorian businesses through this program and believes it will boost interest in regional producers and deliver real advantages to our members".

VisitVineyards.com CEO and founder Robyn Lewis says RACV members will also get the benefits of added information and itineraries for planning their Victorian regional food and wine and travel experiences.

"As Australia's leading online wine and food travel guide, with more than 30,000 wine, food and travel providers across every Australian region listed, visitors to the new RACV Regional Wine and Food Program website can also access our insights and knowledge of the best of wine, food and travel experiences."

She says for regional producers and wineries it exposes them directly to a large new market.



“Our latest research of 1700 people interested in culinary travel shows that 70 percent take trips to wine regions up to four times a year – mostly by car. They want to travel to the regions, and this initiative will give them even more of an incentive to do that, as well as provide options and opportunities for those who don’t know where to start.”

“It’s a way to get back to the days when wines were cheaper at the cellar door, not more expensive – and the program also includes food producers, so both wine and food travellers and producers can benefit directly.”

The benefits also apply to members of interstate and international automotive organisations visiting Victoria.

Chair of the Victorian Food and Wine Tourism Council, Tourism Victoria Board member and co-owner of her own winery, Janelle Boynton, says there is no doubt the initiative will provide economic benefits to regional producers.

“One extra visit to a cellar door, of a valuable interested client wanting to purchase, could sometimes double a small cellar door sales for the week. I know of customers making a visit to a cellar door as part of a planned trip and hoping to pick up some regional product – items that are not in the chains and thus providing them a take home souvenir that they can share with friends.”

She says with great discounts providing customers with an extra incentive, people will travel to take up the opportunities and spend more in the regions, helping to grow our State economy.

Mark Challis, the CEO of Yarra Valley and Dandenong Marketing who has worked in regional tourism in Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales agrees.

“Among all the marketing and promotions we undertake for the region by far the most successful are those activities which offer value for money or reward for loyalty – most businesses in our region are small to medium in size and so promotions which are linked to only paying if a customer buys something are ideal. I can’t think of a more cost effective way to reach two million plus potential buyers.”

While only just launched, the initiative is already being lauded by regional producers.

Third generation winemaker Andrew Hickenbotham of Hickenbotham of Dromana on the Mornington Peninsula says it’s “vital to their survival”.

“This marketing initiative is vital for the future of regional wine tourism and I believe this will be the precursor of many such benefits from RACV and VisitVineyards.com”

For more information and high resolution images:

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**Research comes from a survey of more than 900 wineries, vineyards, accommodation and regional restaurants conducted in January/February 2009 by VisitVineyards.com*



racv.visitvineyards.com
RACV regional wine
& food program

About the Show Your Card and Save (SYCAS) program

The Show Your Card and Save Program is the world's largest member benefits program.

It provides discounts which include sporting goods and apparel, golf equipment, home lighting, electrical appliances, home wares, shoe repairs, travel, and entertainment.

With this new initiative it is now moving into more 'lifestyle' products and into the regions, spearheaded by this new suite of regional food and wine partners brought together by VisitVineyards.com.

Its membership is in excess of 110,000,000 in 70 countries. <http://www.sycs.com.au>

About VisitVineyards.com

VisitVineyards.com is Australia's first and largest comprehensive online guide for wine and food travellers, providing up-to-date information, recommendations and reviews of the best regional culinary travel experiences in the country. In two years it has attracted more than 27,000 subscribers and is building its brand amongst culinary travellers.

VisitVineyards.com brings together more than 30,000 wine, food and travel providers across every Australian region to enable wine and food travellers to find out what's going on, the places not to be missed and information about their next destination. It features a range of current itineraries and Australia's largest wine and food events calendar.

Up to 20 wine, food and travel writers nationwide have contributed to the site, and VisitVineyards.com has also developed international alliances, including world-renowned wine writer Jancis Robinson MBE.

www.VisitVineyards.com