

LAKE HOUSE

Business with purpose

Championing Destination Dining and Regional, Seasonal Food.

In 1981, when Alla and Allan Wolf-Tasker set out to create a destination restaurant near the country town of Daylesford, Victoria, the Lake House property was a run-down farm - overgrown with weeds, with more of a swamp than a lake - and Daylesford was a depressed regional town with an unemployment rate of 20 per cent.

Alla's vision was to create a destination dining experience in the style of French country restaurants, where the menu was sourced from the garden or local suppliers who worked in tandem with the hospitality industry. At the time, this idea was - literally and figuratively - completely foreign in Australia.

Over the ensuing three decades, Alla established Lake House as one of Australia's finest restaurants and manifested her belief that a regional destination restaurant cannot operate in isolation from its region.



Creating a Culinary Culture

Alla has worked tirelessly to foster a local food culture focussed on organic and sustainable practices, mentoring numerous chefs and supporting local producers and fellow restaurateurs.

Economic Nutrition for a Region

In the process, she has been instrumental in putting the Daylesford region on the map as one of Australia's most exciting and innovative food destinations.

"Our community has grown around us and is now deeply engaged with the local food culture and production. We continue to develop this - and the money stays in the community. This success means local growers are able to produce seasonal food for optimal nutrition, interest and diversity - not just because it can be cold-stored for long periods or can be transported great distances," explained Alla Wolf-Tasker, who continues to campaign against industrial food production.

There are now regular farmers' markets and farm gate stalls throughout the region, featuring organic and biodynamic produce. Local growers are experimenting with rare animal breeds and heirloom varieties of vegetables, creating award-winning products - such as the organic chickens from Milking Yard Farm; Holy Goat Cheeses and produce from Angelica Organic Farm - that grace fine dining tables across the nation. Local products such as oils and preserves now have loyal followings across the country.





Introducing Regenerative Farming and Building Capacity

In 2017, the Wolf-Taskers purchased nearby Dairy Flat Farm, a 38-acre degraded farm that they have transformed into a regenerative growing facility following organic practices. Today, the Farm has flourishing flower and vegetable gardens; 300 fruit trees; 200 olive trees; a glasshouse, bakehouse and a vineyard that all supply directly to Lake House. In addition, the farm is a 'laboratory' for experimenting with unusual varieties.

Alla has championed seasonal, local, sustainable food production at all levels of the community, from school programs (such as the Daylesford Primary School Kitchen Garden project) to the halls of government, where she has campaigned vigorously for legislation around food and its production. Her Good Food Matters Regional Producers Scholarship provides \$5000 for a small producer to boost their skills through travel or training.

She has also established the not-for-profit Institute of Gastronomy, a collaboration with William Angliss Hospitality School, intended to plug the skills shortage plaguing kitchens across Australia.

"The outcome I'm hoping for is an innovative approach to culinary education - at the moment it's being so badly dumbed down. The Institute would be an opportunity for students to learn artisanal skills like charcuterie, sourdough baking and butchery," says Alla.

She has sat on numerous restaurant and tourism industry boards and government think-tanks and has long been a spokesperson for the region and the restaurant industry. She was made a Member of the Order of Australia in recognition that, more than almost anyone, she has played a pivotal and driving role in the transformation of the Australian food scene, contributing to a national cultural shift towards more sustainable food production and management.

Other Sustainability Actions (Our Mandatories):

- Alongside their support for the local food industry, Allan Wolf-Tasker is an accomplished artist and the couple have been staunch supporters of the local art scene, with local works adorning the walls and gardens of Lake House.
- Majority of single-use plastics removed
- In rehabilitating both the Lake House and Dairy Flat Farm properties, there was careful use of native species and the active removal of invasive species is on-going. At Dairy Flat Farm, there is a focus on cultivating rare and heirloom species, ensuring their conservation.