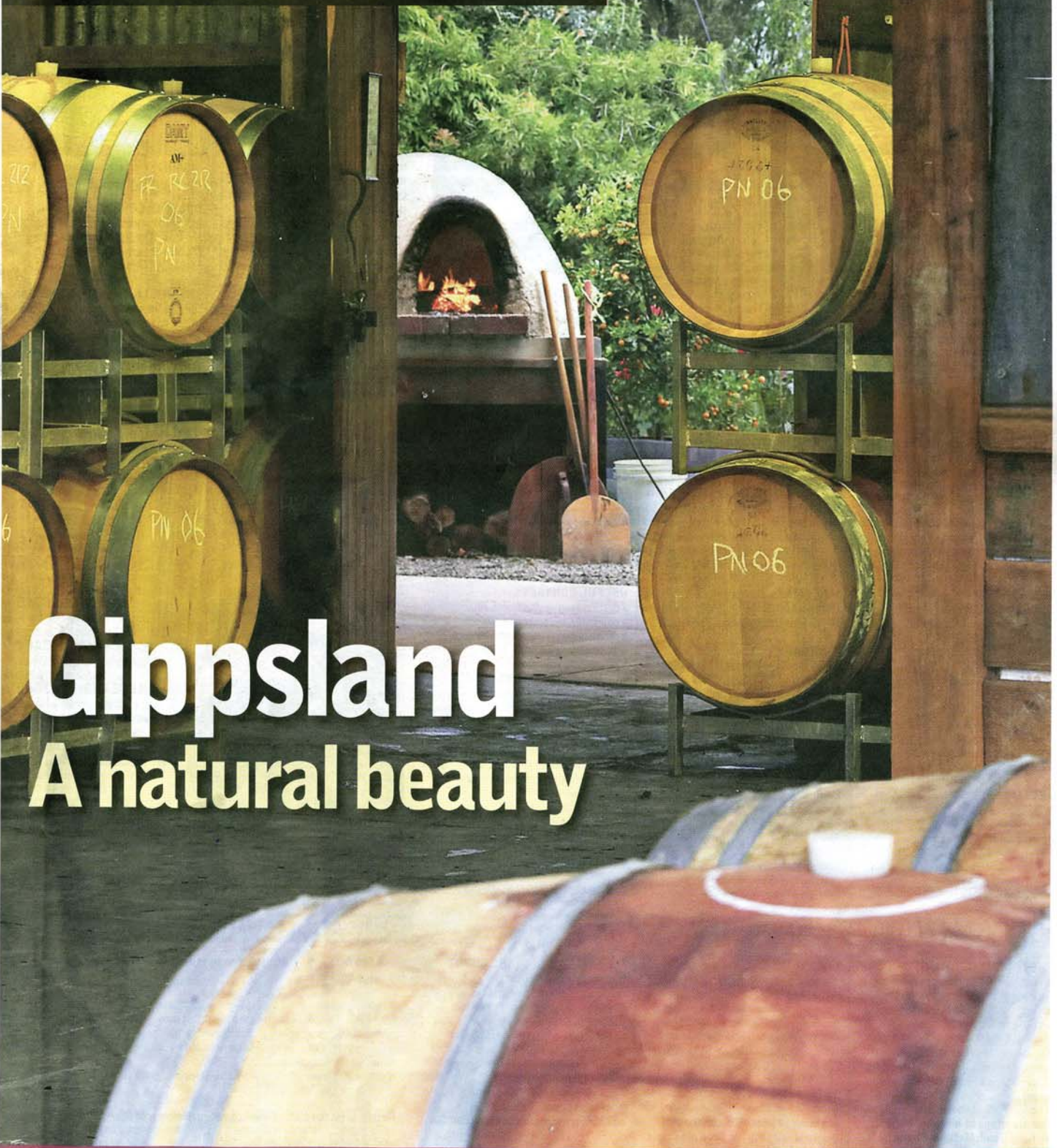




discover

THE WINE REGIONS OF VICTORIA



Gippsland

A natural beauty

FOOD · WINE · PRODUCE · TOURING · ACCOMMODATION

A natural way with wine

Ralph Kyte-Powell enjoys one regional winery's low-tech approach.

WHILE Gippsland has already provided us with a few of Australia's truly great wines, the youth of the vineyards and the small scale of viticulture makes it difficult to identify all its strengths. In a way this is a real plus, as a trip across Gippsland is a voyage of discovery, turning up little-known gems here and there, often surrounded by lovely scenery.

One of those gems sits right at the city end of the Gippsland region. About an hour's drive east of Melbourne, Cannibal Creek winery is only a short drive north of the M1 freeway at Tynong North but feels as though it is light years away from the bustling traffic. Among the pastures, eucalypts and tranquil foothills of the Great Divide, Cannibal Creek's century-old corrugated-iron buildings and down-home feel hark back to a less complicated time.

Cannibal Creek is a relatively new vineyard, planted in 1997 but it has already won many accolades for its fairly priced, high-quality chardonnay, pinot noir and sauvignon blanc.

Part of the secret of its success is found in winemaker Patrick Hardiker's respect for his *terroir*. In wine terms, the French

word *terroir* refers to the sense of place and identity that a wine derives from its soil, its climate, all the factors that uniquely reflect its place of origin. Hardiker pursues sustainable agricultural practices and low-intervention winemaking that contrast with the high-tech, industrial approach of some wineries.

"I like the natural way of doing things regardless of time, cost, fashion or convenience," he says.

Cannibal Creek's self-styled Wine Movement encapsulates the Hardiker philosophy too, by promoting the cause of natural food and wine. You can learn how to build your own wood-fired pizza oven, or enjoy local produce with local wine, and plans are afoot to teach bread-making and salami-making.

The Hardiker family's dedication to the cause of good food and wine goes back to Patrick's mother and father, Terry and Kath, who emigrated from Manchester in 1963. The couple soon after embarked on an Australian odyssey that led them to buy rural properties here and there, growing almonds and strawberries, raising pigs, cattle and sheep. They made cheese, sausages, even spun their own fabric, all in the pursuit of a natural way of life. Eventually they set up Cannibal Creek and son Patrick with his wife Kirsten joined them.

In a time of increasing homogenisation of wine and food, Cannibal Creek's activities in the cause of natural food and



Patrick Hardiker

wine are worth applauding.

By the way, the name Cannibal Creek suggests some sinister history for the place but it is a 19th century corruption of the original name, Connabul Creek.

Cannibal Creek Vineyard: 260 Tynong North Road, Tynong North. Phone 5942 8380. Open Thurs-Mon 11am-5pm. www.cannibalcreek.com.au

225 287. caledoniaaustralis.com

4. CANNIBAL CREEK PINOT NOIR

Few first-time wines have made as big an impact as the Cannibal Creek pinot noir. The style is supremely elegant. Warm earth, red berries and lively spicy aromas open the wine with ripe, sweet fruit intensity to follow on the palate and mocha oak.

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