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# Life & Leisure

Life & Luxury

Food & Wine

## Country classic dining with the doyennes of the Barossa

*Behind the scenes, the women of the famous wine-growing region are a formidable force in husbanding its riches.*



Ladies who lunch – and a whole lot more. Clockwise from left, Kylie Mansfield, Ute Junker (the article's author), Justine Henscke, Jan Angas, Emma Welling, Caitlin Angas, Elli Beer and Margaret Lehmann.

### Ute Junker

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The rich taste of [Maggie Beer](https://www.afr.com/link/follow-20180101-p55ce7)'s paté is making everyone nostalgic. For Kylie Mansfield, general manager of the [Barossa](https://www.afr.com/link/follow-20180101-)

p55f4a]'s most prestigious hotel, The Louise, it conjures up memories of childhood midnight feasts. "I used to sleep over at my friend Anna Seppelt's, and her mother ran a B&B. We would get up in the middle of the night and eat an entire brick of paté that was meant for guests. Her mother would be furious," she laughs.



A vineyard view from The Louise, the Barossa's most prestigious hotel. **Nathan Dyer**

For restaurateur Elli Beer, the paté takes her back to the early days of her mother Maggie's restaurant. "On hot nights the entire family would sleep in the restaurant, because it had air-conditioning and the house didn't," she recalls.

The chicken liver paté – served on perfectly toasted brioche soldiers accompanied by mustard fruits, pickled cucumbers and apple in verjus – is making a comeback. A slot on the new menu at Elli's The Farm Eatery [<https://www.maggibeer.com.au/visit-us/the-eatery>], reopened in June after COVID-19 lockdowns, will be reserved for one of Maggie's classic dishes, such as the paté or the pheasant pie. "It's a tip of the hat to where we began," she says.

Joining Beer at the lunch are some of the Barossa's biggest movers and shakers. These women – farmers, winemakers and more – range in age

from their 30s to 70s and as conversation, wine and laughter all flow freely, their ease with each other is obvious.



Elli Beer's The Farm Eatery, which reopened in June after COVID-19 lockdowns.

Their connections go back generations. When Elli Beer tells a story about her father surprising poachers in their dam many years ago, Margaret Lehmann, wife of the founder of the eponymous Peter Lehmann winery, interjects amid laughter, “They weren’t poachers – they were probably my sons!”

The Barossa Valley is remarkable for the number of local families that trace their roots back six or seven generations, and for its larger-than-life figures. Local heroes such as Robert Hill Smith of Yalumba, Robert O’Callaghan of Rockford Wines and Grant Burge have established national profiles, but the area’s equally formidable women have mostly remained something of a local secret.

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Margaret Lehmann, wife of the founder of the eponymous Peter Lehmann winery.

“This network of matriarchs, this is what brought me back to the Barossa after 24 years away,” Mansfield says. She gestures at Jan Angas, sitting at the other end of the table. At Hutton Vale Farm, the Angas family breed sheep, make wine and host visitors.

Jan Angas, Mansfield says, is also active in a wide range of community organisations “and one of the most passionate brand custodians of the Barossa. Underestimate her at your peril!”

Lehmann, in addition to helping her husband establish and grow his winery and raising two sons (both Barossa winemakers), has spearheaded local organisations including Barossa Tourism [<https://www.barossa.com/see>] and Food Barossa, and served on the Federal Task Force on Regional Development. Now in her 70s, she shows no signs of slowing down, according to Angas.



Caitlin Angas runs the family's meat and wool businesses at Hutton Vale Farm.

“She’s played a massive role in both the wine industry and the arts and she has worked with the government on development issues,” Angas says.

Lehmann also, it appears, has strong views on cutlery. When a plate of pheasant tortellini arrives, nestled in a pool of jus, she looks at her knife and fork disapprovingly and declares, “We need a spoon with this. I don’t want to waste this lovely broth.” Spoons quickly appear on the table. It is clear that what Lehmann wants, Lehmann gets.

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**These products have our names on it – when you launch them, you’re letting a piece of your family out into the**

## world.

— Elli Beer

The younger women at the table are equally dynamic. There is Jan Angas' daughter Caitlin, who runs the family's meat and wool businesses; Kylie Mansfield and her colleague at The Louise, director of sales marketing Emma Welling, and Justine Henschke. A sixth-generation Barossan, Henschke handles marketing and public relations for the family winery [<https://www.afr.com/life-and-luxury/health-and-wellness/no-drinking-and-ballooning-winemaker-s-hobby-takes-him-sky-high-20200518-p54tzm>] and speaks as fluently about her forebears as she does about wine. (Great-uncle Julius was apparently a dab sculptor, carving many of the marble angels on the tombs in the local cemetery).



Pheasant tortellini with brown butter, capers and shallots. Don't forget your spoon for the jus.

While it is traditionally the Henschke men with the public profile, Justine Henschke points out that her mother, Prue, a trained botanist who has worked as the company's viticulturist for more than 30 years, has literally shaped the family holdings.

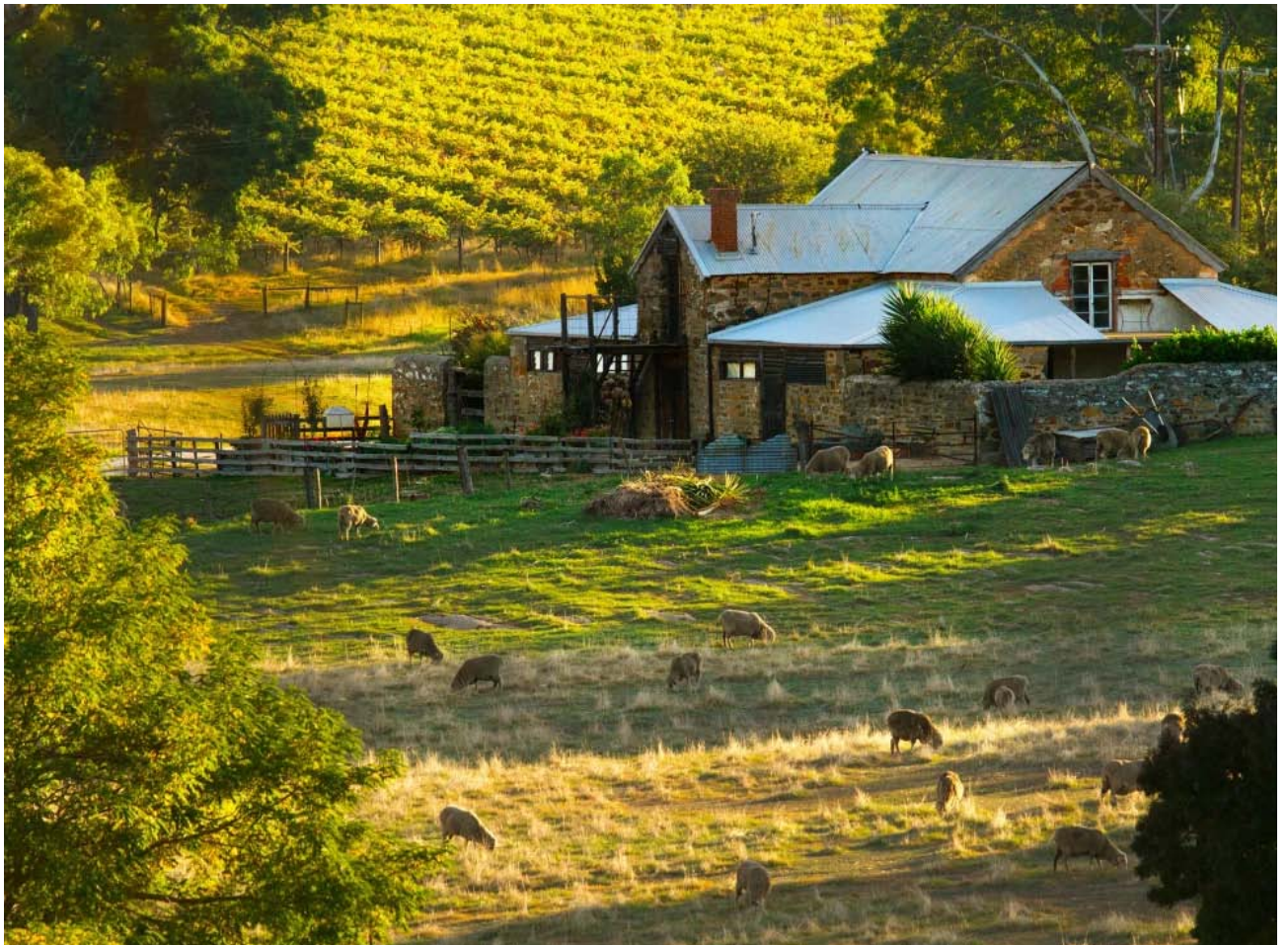
“Our mantra is living within the landscape,” Justine says. “We have more hectares of native bushland and soils than vineyard. We plant native

bushes to provide a natural ecosystem and encourage native insects like the wasps that prey on the vine-eating apple moth.”

It is clear that these women are part of a self-sustaining network.

“In the Barossa, it’s a united front,” Elli Beer affirms. “We’re there for each other without question. You run out of anything, you call me.”

That is even more true in these pandemic days. Like other tourism-reliant areas, the Barossa has suffered, but the ever-positive Beer says there have been upsides. She says that the enforced shutdown in late March gave her team a chance to do some minor renovations and also to rethink their offering.



At Hutton Vale Farm, the Angas family breed sheep, make wine and host visitors. **SA Tourism**

“For the last 2½ years, we didn’t have the time – or the chefs – to focus on the cooking school classes, but that’s changing. Our original head chef, Tim Bourke, is back at the helm and together we’ve developed a whole range of new classes, covering everything from plant-based and gluten-

free cooking to pasta basics and The Pheasant Farm classics. They are proving a huge draw.”



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Beer says that other local businesses will prove just as resilient, thanks to the adaptability that characterises the area’s family businesses. “All these families know to evolve, never to be too arrogant or too complacent.

“These products have our names on it – when you launch them, you’re letting a piece of your family out into the world.”

#### NEED TO KNOW

[The Farm Eatery \[https://thefaromeatery.com/\]](https://thefaromeatery.com/) is open for lunch Friday to Monday. With numbers restricted, reservations are strongly recommended. Tel (08) 8562 1902

[The Louise \[https://thelouise.com.au/\]](https://thelouise.com.au/) The Barossa’s most luxurious accommodation has generously sized suites overlooking the vineyards and two on-site restaurants, including the degustation-only Appellation and the lively three75. **Rates** From \$595 a night, including breakfast and minibar. **Tel** (08) 8562 2722