



# ORANGE

## THE NEW SQUEEZE

Orange boasts a vibrant food and wine scene, pretty pastoral landscapes and warm hospitality. In fact, you'd be hard-pressed to find a more inspired gourmet getaway, writes **Carla Grossetti**.

Orange doesn't need to be told what it's good at. While the pulse of the township has long relied on its proud agricultural traditions, a new slew of stylish hotels, rustic grocers, lively cafés, award-winning wineries and innovative bars and eateries has given the region more reasons than ever to be feeling rather pleased with itself.

OJ, as the locals call it, has been revitalised in recent times thanks, in part, to an influx of committed tree-changers: young locals looking for alternatives to moving to the Big Smoke and creative types craving the space and freedom to cook up innovative ideas.

### Grape expectations

Although the fruit-growing region produces apples, cherries, stone fruit and grapes, it's the cool-climate wines making their mark on the national and international wine stage that's really put the OJ and its surrounds on the map as a great place for a weekend escape.

One of the best times to see examples of OJ's civic pride is at the Orange Wine Festival. Orange Wine Festival chair Michelle Stevens says the October event that began nine years ago has grown to such a size that it is has to be held over a number of weekends. Stevens says this year's festival has "widened

its focus to celebrate the region's food, produce, growers and chefs in order to reflect the town's status as a destination for both wine and food".

### Seasons of change

While the region's modern wine industry was pioneered by a few foresighted individuals who planted vines in the early 1980s, many of the area's original orchards, such as Borrodell on the Mount and Brangayne, diversified into grape growing in the '90s.

The Brangayne vineyard lies on the north-eastern slopes of extinct volcano Mount Canobolas, one of the highest and coolest grape-growing districts in Australia. The Hoskins family had grown apples, pears, peaches and cherries on the property since the 1930s and only replaced the orchards with wine grapes in 1994. Today, Brangayne is managed by David Hoskins, who says "the wines produced from single vineyard grapes express the true terroir of the region".

"As the seasons change, wines that are produced traditionally are allowed to tell their individual story and reveal their true character," says Hoskins, whose boutique vineyard creates award-winning Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir, Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon. **▶**





**FAST FACT**

Orange was given its name by Major Thomas Mitchell in 1846, in honour of Prince William of Orange whom he met during the Napoleonic Wars (Prince William later became the King of Holland).

The property, Brangayne, was named by Hoskin's grandmother, Winsome, after the handmaiden who attends the tragic Isolde in Wagner's opera Tristan and Isolde and prepares a love potion for her mistress.

"That same dedication to Isolde is expressed at Brangayne each day by those who create the wine. Our wine label depicts wine as being the drink of love, which as well as classical music is one of my grand passions," says Hoskins, at his rustic cellar door – which is open daily, by appointment, to groups of 12 or more.

**New ideas ferment**

As well as the old-school experience at boutique vineyards, the future has arrived at Ferment: The Orange Wine Centre and

Wine Store in Orange proper. Housed in a beautifully preserved heritage building, Ferment features a high-tech Enomatic wine system that allows visitors to sample 24 wines by the glass. As well as squirting temperature-controlled wine into your glass, owner Simon Forsyth is on hand to dispense information about the wines, which can be enjoyed along with tasty tasting plates.

Another premium venue in the business of 'relishing all things vinous' is the Union Bank Wine Bar & Dining, which sells predominantly cool-climate wines. Across the courtyard from the bar you'll find the Swinging Bridge, where the historic stables have been converted into a cosy cellar door.

"The food and wine at Union Bank is an expression of my vineyard and of my palate, with a seasonal menu that showcases local produce," says Tom Ward, who manages Swinging Bridge Wines.

**The good life**

On the food front, it's evident that this is a town seriously in love with the land. As well as the region's hatted restaurants – Lolli Redini's, Racine and Tonic – casual eateries such as The Grocer & Co Organics, providore A Slice of Orange, The Endsleigh café at Byng General Store, Emma's Table and The Agrestic Grocer are all wonderful advertisements for rural life.

The Agrestic Grocer is a sort of eco-minded clubhouse that, as well as reflecting the personality of its owners – friends Beau and Katie Baddock and Danielle and Lucas Martin – hints at the prevailing 'farm-to-fork' mindset of the local community. Here, the



local farms and purveyors supply everything from Carbeen Pastured Produce eggs to The Second Mouse Cheese, Sacred Mountain Cider, Abilene Grove olive oil, Orange Roasting Co coffee, Perthville sausages, hand-pumped Badlands Brewery ale and oats rolled by bicycle on site.

### Keeping its cool

The repurposed space, one of the oldest coolrooms in the area, now houses a rustic café, wine store and shop selling farm produce. Its owners, according to Beau, aim to articulate to customers exactly what is on the plate and where it hails from. The specials are written on brown paper each day and include options such as a ploughman's lunch, likely to feature house-made pickles, relish or fruit from the grocer's own 0.6-hectare (1.5-acre) farm.

"Ninety per cent of what is on your plate is translatable to a farmer or grower or artisan in the area," says Beau.

Another café that's become deeply rooted in the area's soul is the very funky Factory Espresso, Bills Beans' flagship café. You may have to compete with locals for a table, but it's worth it for the exceptional coffee and sweet or savoury treats.

It's true that no visit to Orange is complete without immersion in its wine culture. But now the dots in the area have connected, sealing its fate as a formidable food capital, too. [0]



## Round-up

### GET THERE

**Orange** is about 260 kilometres from Sydney. Several airlines fly there regularly. Rent a car from **Avis**: [avis.com.au](http://avis.com.au)

### STAY

#### **Borrodell Vineyard**

298 Lake Canobolas Rd, Orange  
02 6365 3425, [borrodell.com.au](http://borrodell.com.au)

#### **Duntryleague guesthouse**

Woodward St, Orange  
02 6362 3466, [duntryleague.com.au](http://duntryleague.com.au)

### EAT & DRINK

#### **Union Bank Wine Bar & Dining**

84 Byng St, Orange  
02 6361 4441, [unionbank.com.au](http://unionbank.com.au)

#### **The Agrestic Grocer**

426 Molong Rd, Orange  
02 6360 4604, [facebook.com/theagresticgrocer](https://facebook.com/theagresticgrocer)

### EXPLORE

Give Wine Week a squeeze

**Orange Wine Week** is held each spring in celebration of the region's food and wine; this year, it runs from October 17 to November 2. [tasteorange.com.au](http://tasteorange.com.au)

#### **Take the Orange Heritage Trail**

Follow the 'heritage trail' around Orange and enjoy its architecture: handsome Victorian, Gothic, neoclassical and stuccoed Italianate buildings still integral to everyday life.

### MORE INFO

[visitsw.com.au](http://visitsw.com.au)  
[tasteorange.com.au](http://tasteorange.com.au)

