

# — FINALISTS — RAS President's Medal

SIX OF AUSTRALIA'S CULINARY CHAMPIONS ARE VYING FOR THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY'S PREMIER TITLE, THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF NSW'S PRESIDENT'S MEDAL. WE PRESENT THE FINAL THREE NOMINEES.



Left to right: Kerry and Linton Batt from Black Label Berkshire in Western Australia; The Knoll family from Barossa Fine Foods; Gage Roads Brewing Company's Brew Chief and Chief Operating Officer, Aaron Heary.

The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS) is instrumental in turning Australia's premier produce into dinner party must-haves and restaurant menu highlights – with the iconic Sydney Royal medals adorning the finest produce. However, it's the President's Medal that truly tests those Champion medal-winners.

As well as culinary distinction, entrants must impress with their commercial success, environmental integrity and social involvement. Six businesses are chosen to represent the very best of Australia with only one awarded the medal. In this, our second of three special features, we introduce the final three nominees, who join Poachers Pantry, Brasserie Bread and Gundowring Fine Foods in the running for the President's Medal.

#### CATEGORY: PORK

##### BUSINESS: BLACK LABEL BERKSHIRE

##### PRODUCE: PORK LOIN

Black Label Berkshire is a young, innovative and family-owned business specialising in the 'wagyu of the pork

world' – Berkshire pork. The stud registered, premium pedigree Berkshire pigs featured in their products are raised in Beverley, WA, about 130 kilometres south-east of Perth. They are fed on locally grown wheatbelt grain as part of nutritionist-designed meals and live in group housing and ecoshelters, making them 'naturally happy pigs'.

The result is a marbled, bright coloured meat with pure white fat, that's renowned for its sweet, rich flavour, superior juiciness and delicate texture.

Originally livestock farmers, this team of self-confessed rare-breed advocates took their passion for Berkshire and expanded the business to also include ethical management and abattoir facilities, as well as a premium butchery and retail outlet, all with the primary aim of creating a supply chain that ensures consistent quality.

Consistency is so important to the team, they currently employ an animal scientist to map the specific fatty acid and muscle profiles unique to this breed to optimise future breeding, raising and feeding opportunities.

In addition to opposing tail docking and teeth clipping, and not adding hormones or using antibiotics on their prized pigs, careful waste, water and resource management systems have been designed to improve livestock comfort, while minimising environmental impacts.

The business is also introducing an anaerobic digester, which, utilising piggery and abattoir waste, will produce bioenergy they'll use to power their site, proving they are both holistic and forward thinking – and as such, Black Label Berkshire are certainly true RAS President's Medal contenders.

#### CATEGORY: BEER & CIDER

##### BUSINESS: GAGE ROADS BREWING CO

##### PRODUCE: RED RYE IPA

Over the last 14 years, Gage Roads has grown their award-winning and eclectic range to become the largest capacity brewer in WA. The business boasts state-of-the-art German engineered brewing facilities and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – and in WA you will find Gage Roads almost anywhere.



Clockwise from above: A delicious dish created using Black Label Berkshire pork; Gage Roads Brewing Manager Dirk Penny assessing a brew; Franz Knoll, Managing Director of Barossa Fine Foods; a scrumptious spread matched with Gage Roads beers and ciders.

Beyond hotels and bars, Gage Roads are now the exclusive beer of Perth's new Optus Stadium, are a major sponsor for one of WA's largest events, Fringe World Festival, and are the major beer sponsor for Bar Pop, a series of pop-up events and local festivals.

All of this activity means a lot of beer needs to be brewed – 11 million litres annually – and it makes Gage Roads the largest domestic consumer of WA-grown barley. This locally sourced barley is malted nearby at the Barret Burston Malting Co. in Welshpool and reinforces the business' ethos of valuing local relationships, as well as making meaningful contributions to the local economy.

Gage Roads are without doubt passionately local, including 100% local brewing, local warehousing, and local business operations. But beyond WA's borders, the business intends to soon be in every Australian fridge. It may seem like a lofty ambition, but with the current craft beer movement and their nationwide distribution agreements, it's an ambition the business is well-poised to capitalise on.

Gage Roads' limited release deep amber Red Rye IPA is just one of many award-winning brews they have on offer, and it's a beauty. Expect big aromas of American hops and supporting hints of

spice, before the peppery spices, citrus hop character and alcohol sweetness entertain your palate.

#### CATEGORY: DELI MEAT

##### BUSINESS: BAROSSA FINE FOODS

##### PRODUCE: FIOR DE COTTO

The Knoll Family's foray into handcrafted smallgoods can be traced back to Great Uncle Andreas Knoll of Munich, who began training nephew Hans in 1946. In 1957, after Hans had learned all of the family's smallgoods secrets, he journeyed to Australia and set up shop.

Fast forward to Franz and Barbara Knoll today and not much has changed – the Knoll family is still handcrafting smallgoods of impeccable quality, using traditional methods. OK, there is one difference. Their business, Barossa Fine Foods, is now Australia's most awarded smallgoods producer with over 1000 medals to their name.

One of the secrets to their success is the fact prized family recipes, passed down through four generations of smallgoods butchers, are at the heart of Barossa Fine Foods. This is the case with their Champion-winning Fior De Cotto ham. It is prepared using a family brining recipe, where pickling spices are steeped into the curing blend and expertly

balanced to maintain optimal sweetness and saltiness, before being slowly smoked. The end result is a ham that is delicate and naturally succulent with unmistakable smokey notes and a silky texture.

Barossa Fine Foods proudly sources raw materials from local farmers in SA, as well as from providores nationally to create a massive menu of 650 environmentally sustainable products; all operations are done with a focus on minimising environmental footprints and energy consumption, and maximising recycling and renewable energy solutions. In doing so, Barossa Fine Foods proves traditional methods of food production can work seamlessly with modern, energy efficient practices – and can still win plenty of awards in the process.

#### 2018 AWARDS NIGHT

The winner of this year's RAS President's Medal will be announced at an Award Night's Dinner at the Playfair Room, Spotless Stadium on the 28th of March during the Sydney Royal Easter Show. Guests will get to sample all six finalists' prized produce in a delicious menu created by guest chef Colin Fassnidge with dishes matched with selected champion-winning beverages. For more info and tickets, visit [rasnsw.com.au/presmedal](http://rasnsw.com.au/presmedal)