

Cooking with fire...

Humans have used fire in their rituals since the dawn of our species. That element has such primal power to influence us, to create focus, intention and to help us succeed.

When Homage restaurant was born the name had precise meaning and purpose. We were paying Homage to the land, the people and the produce.

The land - the rich soils of the Lockyer Valley, the most fertile farming area in the Southern Hemisphere. It is a reference to the 12,000 of acres of land on which the retreat sits, known as "Old Hidden Vale Station". The land has been rehabilitated for native wildlife, houses the largest wildlife refuge in Australia and is home to a wildlife breeding and release facility, the first of its kind. This land is productive and has purpose. It gives to us and we give back to it.

The people - a reference to the history, the people who had inhabited the homestead and its surrounding rooms, such as the famous Cotton family. Sidney Cotton was an aerial combat pilot in WW1 and a spy recruited to take clandestine aerial photographs of the German military build-up before WW2. A friend of Winston Churchill and Ian Fleming. He was the person James Bond's character was based upon. The Cottons were the owners and inhabitants when the grand old two story homestead burnt to the ground the first time, 99 years ago.

The people is also a reference to the local farmers and producers who support us, show us around their farms, and save the very best of what they have for us. This meaning has deepened further for us as it was the locals who fought the fire in April 2018 and showed up in the weeks that followed, offering their hands to work and their cooking to nourish us in our come back.

The produce - a reference to provenance – a promise that we would only use sustainable, ethical and, where possible, organic produce on our plates. We took this a step further with the introduction of our 89 bed market garden, bee hives, animal nursery and preserving room, driving toward our goal of zero waste and self-sustainability.

Fire is a force of destruction, purification and creation. To us, it has been all three.

The destruction phase was devastating. An event that no one saw coming, causing trauma, tears and heartbreak for the loss of a building, which to most of us, was more like a family member than a physical structure. But the destruction phase was short lived.

Purification and creation were quickly embraced. With list after list of items to be purchased to enable us to create the same experience, it soon became apparent that what we had, still standing, would allow us not only to recreate the Homage experience, but to enhance it and make it purer. We still had all the key components that Homage was based around – the market garden, the smokehouse, the coal pits and rotisserie, the preserving room, the historic animal nursery and incredible barn which, over the years, had become a focal point and is now the home of Homage restaurant.

It overlooks the market garden and allows the interaction which Homage diners have always enjoyed to go to the next level, watching the chefs cooking over the coal pits during dinner. The space is beautiful, ambient and has a sense of place and meaning.

The fire of April 2018 started in the roof above the dining room, and the cause will likely never be known. The ferocious fire of 99 years ago that claimed the original homestead took all of the homestead but the kitchen was saved. Alfred Cotton shot holes in the water tank which ultimately saved it. The kitchen couldn't be stopped then, and it won't be stopped now.

There is also significance to the date. It will be on the 100th anniversary of the original fire that a grand new homestead will open its doors to begin a new chapter for Spicers Hidden Vale.

Ash Martin, Executive Chef

a la carte menu

first

emu heated gently over fire, whey butter, house curd and native pepper

murray cod lightly pickled, bush lemon, lettuce only picked today

mushroom, egg yolk, pine, fermented garlic

homage farm **pork** roasted slowly over coals, apple and celeriac

wood fired leek, **smoked hen**, warrigal green, macadamia

second

grandchester grain-fed **sirloin** baked in hay and milk, coal roasted celeriac, smoked and dried beef, a sauce like diane . . . but not

coal roasted **rooster leg**, barley, malt, buckwheat and garden bits

kangaroo sausage, native pepper, bread, vegemite and onion gravy

barcoo grunter, tomato, fermented grain

homage farm **lamb**, smoked potato, caper berry and olive

for two: rosevale **beef brisket** roasted over coals, potato baked in the fire, sweet corn with tahini and salted curds, condiments

sides - \$12

tomato salad, fermented tomato, soft herbs and black garlic

wood oven baked **potato**, rosemary, smoked butter, wattleseed and lardo

sweet corn with tahini and salted curds

two courses \$75 | three courses \$85 | 7 course tasting menu \$115

third

chocolate, macadamia, rosella and emu egg

carrot, almond, fromage blanc

strawberry, goats milk and toasted grain

pear baked in salt pastry, candied fennel

for two: goat **camembert** baked over coals, a few things from the garden and preserving room

liquid dessert

soumah, dolce **rosé** - yarra valley, vic - 16

noble d'arenburg mud pie, **noble rot** - mclaren vale, sa - 17

morris of rutherglen, premium rare **topaque** - rutherglen, vic - 22

penfolds grandfather rare **tawny** - barossa, sa - 28

Conscience

Homage has taken a dedicated approach to ethical and sustainable practices.

We joined the EarthCheck Evaluate Plus program in 2017 to reduce our waste, water and electricity usage a way of measuring our results, seeking guidance and holding ourselves accountable.

We have a ten person strong “Green Team” onsite and a dedicated Green Team Leader Lianna Holocuk who has worked in the restaurant team for three years.

We grow our own produce in the market garden to reduce food mileage and to verify its origin and freshness. We have bees that pollinate the garden and all of the produce grown on site makes its way to our restaurant plates including the honey from our bees!

As the restaurant produces more organic waste than can be composted onsite we have engaged Mallow Sustainability, a small hobby farm that collects 200L of organic waste per week to produce organic compost. We buy produce from the hobby farm in return to complete the circle.

We pickle, ferment and dehydrate all spent produce or items that are not plate-worthy, such as potato peel, apple cores etc. Anything beyond that goes to our onsite compost or organic scraps to the chickens.

Whatever we can't grow onsite is collected from local farms. Where animals are involved, we make sure we understand the farming practices and ensure ethical and humane treatment. Our chefs are on first name basis with the farmers and are taken behind the scenes regularly. We provide onsite filtered still and sparkling rainwater in our restaurant and guest rooms through our Aquachiarra filtration systems, replacing our use of plastic water bottles. This has reduced our plastic bottled water order by 500 units per month.

Homage is leading the way with reducing plastic and we've banned the plastic straw in our restaurant and joined 'The Last Straw' campaign. We now offer paper straws instead. Through Soap Aid we have a simple way of paying it forward by us setting up a small collection bin for the bars of soaps that guests leave behind. The soap is sent to Soap Aid for recycling and re-purposing to new bars that are sent to communities lacking this life-saving hygiene commodity we so often take for granted.

The sustainability approach extends to our 12,000 acre property which has been rehabilitated through weed and pest eradication programs, is home to a large nature reserve and koala eucalypt plantation and in 2017 became home to a world class breeding and release facility for native animals.

Thank you for being part of our journey.

