

## **Excitement escalates for epicurean Escape**

The countdown is on with the Margaret River Gourmet Escape only hours away, and excitement is building with the arrival of world-renowned British chef and television star Heston Blumenthal in Perth.

Tourism Minister Liza Harvey joined Heston Blumenthal to officially launch the three-day event yesterday, which opens to the public tomorrow.

"Last year's inaugural Margaret River Gourmet Escape exceeded all expectations, and this year will see even more satellite events and a larger capacity at the Gourmet Village at Leeuwin Estate Winery," Mrs Harvey said.

"As well as Heston Blumenthal, visitors to the Gourmet Village on Saturday and Sunday will be able to see and hear the likes of Rick Stein, Alex Atala, Sat Bains, Shane Osborn, Tetsuya Wakuda and Adriano Zumbo.

"The high profile of Gourmet Escape and the media attention it generates, thanks to the likes of Heston Blumenthal and Rick Stein, provides a massive boost to WA's reputation as a food and wine producer and culinary destination," the Minister said.

"This event already rates among the best food and wine festivals in the Asia-Pacific region, and ticks all the boxes in terms of bringing social and economic benefits to WA's towns and regions."

The festival kicks off with a VIP opening night tonight at Little Meelup Beach in the north of the Margaret River Region, where the stars will mingle bare-foot on the sand enjoying Margaret River's world-class wine and gourmet produce.

Augusta Margaret River Tourism Association CEO Pip Close said the event was set to draw international attention to the Margaret River Region.

"The program this year is even more impressive than last year's – indulgent long lunches amongst the vines, pop-up beach BBQs, exclusive intimate dinners with celebrity chefs, plus cooking demonstrations, masterclasses, wine tastings, panel discussions and more.

"The Margaret River Region is a world-class food and wine destination and the Gourmet Escape is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the region to the world," said Ms Close.

Australian Hotels Association CEO, Bradley Woods said the Gourmet Escape was an important event for WA, hosting exceptional international hospitality talent.

"What better place than WA's own Margaret River to showcase the best of Australian food, wine and hospitality talent.

"On behalf of the hospitality industry in Western Australia, I certainly offer the warmest of welcomes to all of those chefs, producers and industry representatives attending this weekend. I am sure the Margaret River food and wine region and Western Australia will not disappoint," said Mr Woods.

The Margaret River Gourmet Escape gives premium producers from across the State the opportunity to display their products to an international and national consumer and trade audience, and feeds into the State Government's goal of increasing the value of the State's tourism industry from \$7.5billion in 2012 to \$12billion by 2020.

The event officially kicks off to the public tomorrow. Limited tickets are still available through [Ticketek](#). Accommodation is still available through [www.margaretriver.com](http://www.margaretriver.com).

**ENDS**

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