

## It all happens at the Long Table Lunch

By **BETH JOHNSTON**

**W**HAT better way to showcase a region's bountiful fresh produce than inviting people to taste it for themselves?

In a celebration of its beautiful seafood, fresh fruit, vegetables and value-added products, each year the Gascoyne Food Council hosts the Gascoyne Food Festival.

The festival is spread over three days, ending with a feast in the Long Table Lunch, and draws foodie visitors far and wide.

This year's festival was held in August, in the middle of the region's May-October market season.

The Gascoyne Food Council is a producer-driven group passionate about promoting the region's fresh produce, through awareness that will encourage consumers to seek out and purchase what the Gascoyne has to offer.

Part of the council's charter is to implement the Gascoyne Food Plan, a five year plan (2010 - 2015) looking at providing information and support to the horticulture, pastoral and fishing industries to maximise future opportunities for primary industry.

According to the council's executive officer Alex Harper Maslen, this year was the fourth Long Table Lunch after the inaugural event was held in 2010.

"The initial Long Table Lunch was held at Bumbak's on the river with tickets for 80 and most of the tickets were sold to market agents and local growers," Alex said.

"In 2011 and 2012, it was held at Brickhouse Station and we saw a good representation of agri-industries from Carnarvon including pastoral and fishing.

"This year, it was held at Bentwaters Plantation on North River Road and 150 tickets were sold in just three days and it was a huge success.

"So the event has certainly gone from strength to strength."

Spread over three days, this year's festival incorporated a chef's paddock tour, a produc-

er/chef night hosted by local grower group Loveapple to promote selling Carnarvon produce direct to restaurants in Perth, the main event of the Long Table Lunch and chef cooking demonstrations at the Gascoyne Growers Markets.

In attendance this year was Agriculture Minister Ken Baston, Senator Alan Eggleston and the Hon Mark Lewis, who joined the crowd at Bentwaters Plantation for a sumptuous 11 course lunch.

Hosted by the Council and with funding support from Eventscorp through the Royalties for Regions program, the lunch was a celebration of local Gascoyne fare and farmers in a tapas-style menu.

Ten chefs from Perth visited the region and met farmers before each cooked a dish to reflect their passion in food and local produce to the 150 guests.

"Highlights included beef from Bullara Station and Lyndon Station, fresh fish from Pickles Point Seafood and deserts made from Morels' various exotic and tropical fruits," Alex said.

"Guest chefs, including WA Food Ambassador Don Hancey and masterchef guest Brendan Pratt cooked up a selection of local fish, prawns, beef and fruit and vegetables for what was heralded the best lunch yet."

As a result of the Gascoyne Food Festival, local Carnarvon produce is now being sold direct to chefs in Perth and can be found on the menu at the Subiaco Hotel, Incontro, Beluga, Rockpool and the Old Brewery.

The 2014 Gascoyne Food Festival will be held in Carnarvon from August 14-16, with the Long Table Lunch on August 15.

The Gascoyne Food Council is also currently working on holding a Long Table Lunch in Perth in 2014.

### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- Gascoyne Food Festival
- [www.gascoynefood.com.au](http://www.gascoynefood.com.au)



▲ Guests at the long table lunch during the Gascoyne Food Festival.



▲ An Asian-style salad done with a Gascoyne twist.



▲ Incontro chef Peter Manifis served up some delicious dishes for guests at the festival.