

## Worldly Delights: Tasmania

Tasmania's unspoiled landscape offers extraordinary edibles  
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Traditionally, **Australia's** temperate island state of **Tasmania** has been known for its apple, which thrive due to the cooler winters and warm summer months. These apples include tart green Granny Smiths, blushing Jonathans and red-streaked Jonagolds – familiar to North Americans – as well as the lesser known Democrats and Red Fujis. A prime way to sample Tasmania's apple bounty is as hard cider.

Tasmanian pubs increasingly offer ciders on tap; the everyday label is **Mercury**, but those seeking a more artisanal spin should look for **Two Metre Tall**, which produces cider and ale at its own 600-hectare farm in the **Derwent Valley**, just outside Tasmania's capital, **Hobart**. Its **Huon Farmhouse Dry Cider** is made from the old English apple variety known as **Sturmer Pippin** and is brewed in the bottle. The Two Metre Tall Company also brews a pear cider called **Poire**. From October to April, visitors are welcome to attend a series of food and music events at the farm.

Many apple producers have diversified to grow stone fruit and grapes, and over the past 15 years, Tasmania has established itself as a producer of cooler climate wines: in particular Pinot Noirs and champagne-style sparkling wines. These days Hobart and Tasmania's second-largest city, **Launceston**, are surrounded by vineyards. **Wine Tasmania** defines four wine routes: Launceston's **Tamar Valley**, the **Southern wine route** around Hobart, the **East Coast route** around **Bicheno** and the **North West route** around **Devonport**. (The drive from Hobart in the south to Launceston in the north is about two and a half hours via the island's main highway.)

Tasmania's cheese industry is also thriving, thanks to an abundance of dairy cows grazing in pristine fields. **Mersey Valley** cheese is available at every Coles (Tasmania's major supermarket chain) and the well-known **King Island Dairy**, located on a remote island in **Bass Strait** between Tasmania and the Australian mainland, welcomes visitors to its **Fromagerie** tasting room.

Smaller artisanal producers include **Ashgrove Farm Cheese** in **Elizabeth Town**, west of Launceston, where cheesemaking is demonstrated along with samplings and sales of local foods. Its cheddar-style cheeses include **Wild Wasabi**; other flavours include the lovely local lavender and the native pepperberry. **Nick Haddow's Bruny Island Cheese Company** handcrafts soft and hard cow and goat cheeses. Its **Cellar Door** tasting room is open for wine, cheese and fresh-baked breads. It's accessible via ferry from the **Channel Highway** south of Hobart.

Of course, seafood is also a big part of Tasmanian cuisine, especially crayfish (what North Americans would call lobster), abalone and oysters. Owned by an old Tasmanian fishing family, **Mures** is a landmark on the Hobart waterfront and offers its diners a view of fishing boats unloading their catch of the day. Another nearby institution is the unpretentious **Fish Frenzy**, which offers gourmet fish 'n' chips under dockside umbrellas.

But perhaps the most precious of Tasmania's food products is its honey. Home to untouched temperate rain forests, Tasmania provides a unique environment for bees. In particular, Tasmanian leatherwood honey is internationally renowned as an incomparable delicacy. Made from the pollen of the lovely white flowers of the leatherwood tree, its smooth texture and complex bouquet – redolent of eucalyptus, tea tree and other unexpected flavours – make it unparalleled.

Honey can be found in food boutiques across the island, but **Honey Tasmania** in Launceston assembles a wonderful array from fine producers like **Miellerie** – and tastings are free. It's located on **Quadrant Mall**, which curves off **St. John Street**, a pleasant two-storey retail area of mixed Victorian and modern architecture with a charming illuminated fountain in Launceston's very walkable town centre.

Still unspoiled, Tasmania offers a temperate climate and distinctive terroir that make it a choice find for lovers of simple foods made from the purest of natural ingredients. ▣