

LUNCH ON THE VERANDAH INDIGO RIDGE, ORANGE

It seemed like a good idea at the time. This thought inevitably creeps into the mind of anyone holding a function and caterers are no exception.

Wrestling leaden crates of plates, individually polishing each and every piece of cutlery, trying not to break the glasses on the way there, making endless lists of things not to be forgotten (but which seem to be always forgotten), shopping, cooking, packing, more cooking, more packing and still more cooking. Nowhere near enough sleep, hoping we will be lucky with the weather. Will people come? Will they like it?

Paul and Trish, affectionately known as the Indigos, are on their knees with exhaustion after finishing picking all the reds the day before and I suspect could well do without all this.

It seemed like such a good idea at the time. But then by some miracle we seem to be organised.

Orange turns on a classic autumn day for the forty guests who arrive and duly claim their seats at the long table overlooking the vineyard. Dedication of lunch to the Indigo Ridge 2008 vintage is met with a healthy round of applause and a tangible air of celebration soon takes hold. The wine flows, the food is ready.

Schiacciata made with cabernet grapes is up first and teams beautifully with Jannei goat's curd. This Tuscan flat bread is now our new best friend and we all deem it should become the hallmark dish of vintage.

Caramelised late season tomatoes with puff pastry and rocket follow before bowls of sticky marmalade glazed pork and roast chicken with figs, hazelnuts and vincotto arrive. Everyone's favourite, apple and blackberry crumble, brings a plate scraping finish.

Clean plates are every cook's reward and a warm satisfaction creeps over me as nothing except well wishes returns from the table and guests drift home with a contented air.

I knew it was a good idea.

