



THE MURRAY

A FEW OF MY

favourite THINGS

Stefano De Pieri
Chef/Restaurateur

FAVOURITE PLACE TO STAY

Anywhere beside the Murray with a sandbar and some river red gum. You don't need a tent, just a sleeping bag or a couple of blankets.

FAVOURITE DAY TRIP

Mallee Cliffs National Park, 38km from Mildura. I love to go there and get lost for a bit (www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au).

FAVOURITE FOOD EXPERIENCE

Eating a mandarin straight off a tree.

FAVOURITE OBJECT

An old cleaver I found in the kitchen at The Grand Hotel, Mildura.



THE MURRAY

Long and winding, changing yet eternal, The Murray is a great story composed of multiple sub-stories. The river was and is a vital cradle of Aboriginal culture. It played a central role in European exploration of the land, and was a conduit for agricultural expansion. It feeds orange groves, rice paddies, vineyards, dairy farms. Solemn river gums and shady billabongs provide habitat for a plethora of native animals and

birdlife, best glimpsed from the deck of a paddlesteamer or houseboat. A contemporary strand of the story is the development of dynamic wineries and superb regional cuisine. Whether sampled in small portions or experienced as a majestic whole, The Murray is an unmissable part of the Australian narrative.

'I THINK WHEREVER YOU ARE YOU HAVE TO FIND THE LOCAL STORIES. THE STORIES FOR OUR REGION ARE THE ENVIRONMENT, THE RIVER, MIGRATION, ABORIGINALITY.'

Stefano de Pieri is famous for his cooking. As host of the acclaimed TV series *A Gondola on the Murray*, author of four culinary books, and the genius behind one of the country's greatest regional restaurants, it might be assumed that he is all-consumed by the world of food.

He isn't.

While his passion for food is unquestionable, his fervor for politics, the arts and the environment runs just as deep. Friend Max Gillies, who met Stefano after his arrival in Melbourne from Italy in 1974, has described him as a Renaissance man.

Despite living beside the Murray River for less than two decades, he has become an articulate and passionate advocate for the great inland waterway.

He successfully maintains the position of his Mildura restaurant Stefano's at the absolute forefront of Australian regional dining while also campaigning in State elections. Stefano waxes lyrical about the quality of local Mallee lamb, as one might expect from a food legend – but he goes on to explain the environmental implications of sheep farming before segueing into a historical analysis of CEW Bean's 1910 book *The Wool Trail*.

A Renaissance man indeed.