

# 5 minutes with Ruth Gallace

from Rebello

Ruth Gallace and her husband Matt started boutique winery and cider house Rebello some eight years ago, making fruit wines using berries from the family farm on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula. Two years ago they moved to cider, producing Australia's first 100 per cent real fruit-blended cider, Cheeky Rascal, and experienced such phenomenal success that the trial run sold out before production even finished. They have since won a string of accolades, both nationally and internationally. We chat to Ruth about their success



## What inspired you to start Rebello?

Matt's parents own one of the largest strawberry farms in Australia, Sunny Ridge, and a lot of product is simply not suitable for supermarkets or wholesale markets due to it being out of shape or slightly bruised. We wanted to find a use for that fruit and, being situated on the Mornington Peninsula, we saw wine as a really viable option. At the time, a lot of the fruit wine made in Australia was of poor quality so we saw this as an opportunity to set the standard in quality fruit wines in this country.

## How did the name Rebello come about?

Rebello is a play on the Italian word for rebel. Matt's grandfather came to Australia from Italy some three decades ago and bought land on the Mornington Peninsula where he planted fruit trees. On a holiday, his son Mick thought the land would be better suited to strawberries and pulled the trees and replanted the land with strawberries, and Sunny Ridge Strawberry Farm was born. We wanted to reflect that sense of rebel in the family and our own move to break away from the family business and do something completely different – while still respecting the traditional winemaking techniques handed down over generations.

## Why did you decide to move into ciders?

Cider started gaining a cult following in 2010 but there weren't any 100 per cent real fruit-blended ciders in Australia. We decided to



change that! The first ciders we made were apple and strawberry apple. The popularity of our ciders has taken us all by surprise, and we've continued to evolve the range to now include seven new varieties never attempted before, which are based purely on consumer feedback.

## Tell us about the pairing of your wines and ciders with food.

Our products extend from sparkling fruit wines made with 100 per cent real strawberries, to ciders made from different varieties of apple and berries, depending on the season. We don't use additives, flavourings or concentrates in our products. Our most successful sparkling 'Strawbellini' [the only Australian sparkling to be awarded a double gold medal at the San Francisco International Wine Competition along with France's renowned Veuve Clicquot and America's Piper Sonoma] is perfect when served alongside smoked salmon and scrambled eggs. Or for a real indulgence try it with some of Sunny Ridge's freeze-dried chocolate-coated strawberries. Our products are just as good paired with decadent dishes such as confit duck ravioli in buerre noisette with mixed leaves, fresh pomegranate and

apple cider vinaigrette; finished off with Strawberry Port infused Stilton cheese... or simply with your favourite roast.

## What other products have you launched?

Our most recent product is Cheeky Little Batch – artisan batches of cider made with Victorian heritage Kingston Black and Dabinett cider apples, some wild yeast and an oak barrel ferment – which was paired perfectly most recently at the Brunswick Street Cider House in Melbourne with German-inspired succulent pork belly roast.

## Are people able to visit your cellar door or is it all online?

We have a cellar door at Sunny Ridge Strawberry farm, as well as online.

## What's next for Rebello?

In November, we will release a Methode Cider, which is an alternative to sparkling wine or Champagne. It's made using 100 per cent local granny smith apples, with only 1000 bottles to be initially produced. And we are extending our products to more independent outlets across Australia and are looking at export markets particularly in South East Asia. [rebellowines.com.au](http://rebellowines.com.au)