



grow and make the food that he loves. "One of the true advantages of the region is what it has to offer, and that includes many talented people," says Ryan. "I have been fortunate with the people I have met and the help they have given me. In the country, people just open their farm gates to you."

Learning at the hands of the masters is one thing but Ryan, or Spike as many people know him, has been a devoted student prepared to put in the effort. From heritage chickens, to homegrown produce and olives, he has learnt about everything from permaculture to wine making, curing meats and raising pigs. "When I've had a question, I've found there's no harm in asking. Everyone from the local farmer to a world class vigneron will share their knowledge."

If there are role models for how to develop a deeper appreciation for the food we eat then UK chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall of River Cottage fame is someone Ryan can relate to. Closer to home, Matthew Evans, the Gourmet Farmer from Tasmania, represents a food philosophy that feels close to Ryan's heart.

The vision for Ryan and his partner Betty, who has a hospitality background and is also involved in the

family business, is to create their own smallholding with cottage accommodation where people can dive into a farm experience and enjoy everything from "feeding the animals, collecting eggs, tasting wine straight from the barrel, walking through the orchard garden and enjoying home grown produce," says Ryan.

He is also enthusiastic about more community-orientated ways of doing things including working in a time economy where barter and exchange are valued. "I am raising pigs for a local farmer in exchange for some of their offspring next season. No money changes hands and I get to learn about the whole supply chain. I have bartered graphic design services for whey and cheese from a local cheese maker."

A sense of community also permeates his love for food and sharing the table. "We have 500 olive trees and the picking day is a large affair with many people helping. We share a meal to celebrate the harvest, often a beautiful free range pig on the spit cooked slowly since early morning. We then press the oil for our own kitchens and for people to buy in The Providore, along with our housemade bread, condiments, and other specialities."

"I think I am happiest when I look at our table laden

OPPOSITE PAGE The vegetable garden and shed at Ryan and Betty's Kangaroo Ground property. THIS PAGE Ryan takes pride in working the land, and is raising these pigs for a local farmer in exchange for some of their offspring next season. PREVIOUS PAGE Ryan at home in the garden; and scenes from his wine barrel room.