

MOVEABLE FEASTS

Amelia Park's succulent meats, delicious wines and upcoming range of sauces are about to break out of WA and take on the world

words | jennifer susanto-lee • images | steve lloyd-smith

Butcher Greg Ryan doesn't mince words when it comes to his new business partner.

"Amelia Park is an amazing place. It's just fantastic what Peter's done down there. It's like heaven on Earth for horses and humans. He was a very hard worker when he was younger and he's still working just as hard now. He's a very entrepreneurial person."

In fact, it's pretty tough to find anybody who has anything even remotely left-of-centre to say about Amelia Park supremo Peter Walsh.

The former farmer is at the top of his game and shows no sign of slowing down. Having just returned from one of many overseas trips, the energetic 50-something is the proud owner of one of the fastest-growing enterprises in WA.

Born in 2002, Amelia Park is a fairly recent arrival to the business scene, but the land on which it sits has been in the Walsh family since 1957. Back then, the farm was essentially a beef and lamb meat processing plant, but under the guidance of Peter and brother Greg, the company has re-packaged itself as Amelia Park, a top-notch producer and supplier of meat, wine and an ever-expanding range of quality products.

Sourced from a range of local producers, and subject to strict quality control, at this stage it is Amelia Park's lamb and beef that's making the most noise, appearing at some of the best-known restaurants and hotels in the country and a good part of the rest of the world as well.

Multi-award winning chef Neal Jackson, of Jackson's restaurant, is a long-term fan.

"They've got a very good product," he says. "It's just great lamb. We always have it on the menu in at least one or two dishes."

Greg Ryan, from Ryan's Quality Meats, who is the new exclusive distributor for Amelia Park beef, says he's also very proud to be working with such a high-end product. "It's beef from south-west Western Australia that's selected from probably four of the best farmers in that area," he says.

"They've got their feeding regime correct, so it's a very clean product. And the quality is second-to-none. There's a selection criteria that it has to fit into. We start at the top, and the criteria works back from there. So our beef carcass ranges from 220kg to 280kg bodies. There has to be a fat depth of no more than 8mm, which is very good.

"Then there's the meat-colour criteria and the fat-colour criteria. And that's only selected from the top 30 per cent of the beef every day. So we're getting the best of the best. That's the body that suits what we want to do. We want to produce the best beef in Australia."

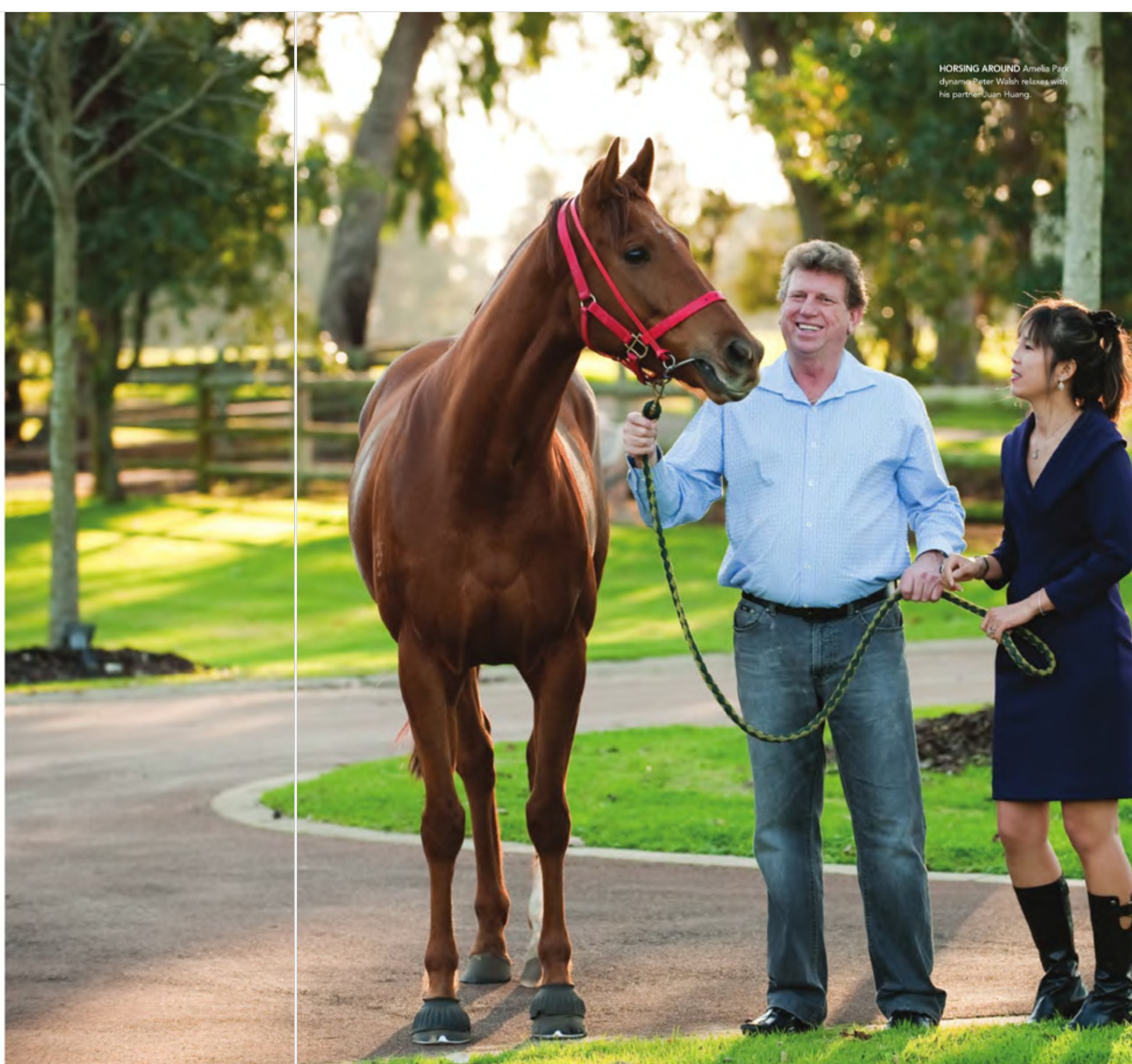
But Amelia Park is not just about meat. No way. The business has also invested heavily in another passion of the Walsh family – horse racing – and the property has a state-of-the-art horse set up, including a lakeside training track, horse agistment facilities, syndicates, a breeding program and a horse swimming pool.

You'd think that would be enough for even the most manic among us. But Peter's not exactly the kind of guy to sit back and put his feet up.

"We don't just want to stick to producing meat anymore," he admits. "We want to get into other products that will complement our meat. And we plan on bringing the best together."

To that end, they've got together with the best themselves. Neal Jackson has come on board as an industry consultant. The pair met 12 years ago when Neal established the now-famed Jackson's

HORSING AROUND Amelia Park dynamo Peter Walsh relaxes with his partner Juan Huang.





CHEERS Daniela Gordon, Peter Walsh, Juan Hung and Amelia Park winemaker Jeremy Gordon enjoy the delicious produce; (below) juicy lamb cutlets with herb crust; (right) Amelia Park cabernet merlot.



and Peter became a silent partner. And now Neal's about to return the favour, as a flavour consultant.

"He's a real perfectionist and is going to make up all the flavours that will match our lamb and beef, such as sauces and marinades," Peter says.

"We're sending him off to China this week, right out to the Mongolian border, where there are a lot of lambs with different tastes and flavours and cuts. And he'll be studying all that to see if we can relate it back to what we're doing here.

"Then we'll start looking into olive oil with him. And, down the track, there will also be chocolate. Neal's a multiple award-winner, and we are keen to go to the next level with him."

Neal's been to China before, he says, but not to study the Chinese lamb industry. "It's just like Peter to be thinking outside the square," he chuckles. "He's definitely a visionary. He never sits still and is always looking forward. It's quite exciting to be getting involved."

In fact Peter has been wheeling and dealing with China for almost 20 years, in lamb and beef

as well as sheepskin for the fashion trade. And he already has an office in Beijing.

"There's a lot of talk these days about business expanding into China, but Peter's been doing business with them since he first visited China around 18 years ago," says Daniela Gordon, part-owner of Amelia Park Wines.

"He's always looking at new ways of doing things. He's really visionary in his approach."

Daniela is married to winemaker Jeremy Gordon, winner of the esteemed Jimmy Watson Trophy and former co-owner and founder of Flametree in Margaret River.

Amelia Park Wines was launched in July, with varieties including a cabernet merlot, a shiraz and a sauvignon blanc semillon, and, true to form, the label is now in the process of going global, with many Sydney hotels and restaurants stocking the wines and exports already underway to China, Mauritius and the UK.

When Amelia Park formally launches its new cuts of meat, marinades and other ranges this



Chef Neal Jackson is Amelia Park's new flavour consultant.

spring, Jeremy and Daniela will be flying to the UK to spruik their wines in London. According to Peter, people are buying them without even tasting them because they know of Jeremy's excellent reputation in the industry.

Most recently, Peter has had his sights on Africa. Wait for it – he wants to branch out into smallgoods. They've recruited a top smallgoods manager from South Africa, who will be arriving this spring.

"South Africans are very big on meat and barbecues. They do a lot of aged meats, as well as sauces and marinades. They always serve up their meat with some kind of condiment. It's absolutely beautiful.

"And then we'll be going to the next stage. We'll start out with making sausages and burgers, and then we want to advance to other smallgoods, such as cold meats. All our machines are ready to go, so it's just a matter of time."

But at the end of the day, it is Peter's love for the farming industry he was born into that has him looking to the horizon.

"We've been in this industry for a long time and want to continue being in it for a long time," he reflects.

"And we just want to keep being motivated. Being surrounded by top people really helps keep up that motivation. We believe having multi-award winners around us who believe in perfection and have the passion that we do, that's our next step."

And what could possibly be next, one might wonder. A day spa, perhaps? A private resort in Bali? No, really. ☺



FOR THOSE WHO LOVE ROAM-MADE COOKING.

