

Brasserie Trip Report April 2012

Trip Leader: Ian and Rhonda McKinley

After having two camp oven cook ups at Rydal which were extremely windy and uncomfortable Ben Sweetnam and myself ventured out to find a more suitable site in the bush. It was a wet and windy Saturday, we were armed with sketchy instructions I had received from Bruce Gendle while having a couple of beers around a camp fire twelve months earlier. After we had travelled several tracks we came across a small camp site with a track leading off to one side into the bush, we followed it and there it was - the new Brasserie site. It was blowing a gale and bucketing down rain but it ticked all the boxes; sheltered from wind, well drained while raining and plenty of fire wood close by and most importantly it is in the bush.



Now to the Brasserie weekend. We arrived around 7.30pm on the Friday night and set up camp under starry skies amongst other members who had arrived earlier in the day. A fire was started and we all sat around, discussing the weekend ahead and summarising what might be cooked for tomorrow night's dinner. Finally we all retired to bed just prior to midnight under clear skies.

We were awakened in the morning by the kookaburras and cockatoos screeching loudly to inform us we had invaded their territory. After a hearty cooked breakfast the blokes set off to collect wood for the cook up while the ladies washed the breakfast dishes and caught up on all the latest gossip. It was overcast and the forecast was not good; possible showers with 30 to 40 knot winds abating later in the day. I was confident if we had a big fire it would keep the rain away. By 9.30am other members were arriving and setting up camp for the weekend, the fire pit was prepared and loaded with wood to ensure there would be ample coals. By 11.30am the first scones were cooked followed by dampers, stuffed mushrooms, cakes, and pizzas. There were a few light showers and the wind was easing, so more wood was added to the fire to keep the rain away. More food was cooked, eye brows were singed, red faces were becoming redder from the extreme heat, umbrellas were raised and lowered while the showers came and went, people moved further away from the fire as the heat increased. By 4.00pm the fire was roaring with flames reaching 4 metres in the air, it was near impossible to get coals from the fire without singeing hair off any exposed body parts.

Approximately 60 members including children were around the fire, camp ovens were starting to line up around the fire with the aromas of stews, casseroles, chicken dishes, beef dishes, potato bakes, curries and desserts just to name a few. Finally the showers cleared and the wind dropped right off with everyone sitting around the fire chit chatting while lifting of the lids to check the food. More coals were added to the lids to complete the cooking process to ensure the perfect dish.



Finally 6.00pm came, which was the scheduled time to eat, camp ovens were removed from their little pile of coals, coals were scraped from the lids, lids were removed and members lined up to sample the wide variety of dishes. There were 23 camp ovens and by the time you had a small sample from each one, there was not much room left for the desserts. What a feast! There were no burnt dishes, no under cooked dishes and the food was restaurant quality. Then the magnificent desserts were served to top off a wonderful meal. Well done to all the cooks for experimenting with their camp ovens and for sharing their food.

With bellies full and dishes washed, the fire was stoked up, chairs were pulled in closer and everyone sat around telling stories of previous trips and enjoying each other's company. Slowly people drifted off to bed for a well earned sleep. Everyone woke to a nice sunny Sunday morning. Slowly we prepared and ate breakfast and all agreed it was great to pack up the gear nice and dry and head for home after a great weekend.

Hope to see you all at the next Brasserie for another great meal

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