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**By Tracey Lenz**  
**605 words**

## FOOD AND WINE

### DANCE WITH THE WINE GODDESS OF THE GLADSTONE REGION

She is a mystical being with many faces and names. Her ethereal nature and delicate perfume so intoxicating you cannot ignore it. Her scent captures your imagination and transports you to a world of sheer bliss. Her dance with you starts and ends with a smile. This magical creature is wine, a being that has travelled the world through the passage of time, exhilarating those in her wake. She is now at home in the Gladstone Region, where boutique wineries showcase the best of this majestic being in all her glory.

As the sun rises and warms the rolling eucalypt-covered hills of Gecko Valley, the wine goddess readies herself for another day of tantalising connoisseurs with her heady delights. The Central Queensland coast is not her typical residence, considered too hot, too wet and humid for grape growing. However, the unique coastal dry winter/dry summer climate in combination with prevailing sea breezes has created excellent wine making conditions at Gecko Valley Winery, 15 minutes drive from the Gladstone CBD.

Situated on 100 hectares this exciting viticultural experiment has met with enormous success. Owners, Tony and Colleen McCray have created a magnificent setting to enjoy their award winning wines. The tranquil bush setting surrounded by fountains, waterfalls and over 150 rose bushes draws visitors out of their vehicles and into the air conditioned wine tasting room where they can experience sophisticated dry styles and easy drinking fruity varieties which perfectly complement the Queensland climate.



After sampling the palette-tingling array of wines, visitors can adjourn to the 2002 and 2005 QR Tourism Award winning Rose Garden Café to sample gourmet meals that flawlessly compliment the wines' characteristics.

Alternatively, patrons can wander around the Lazy Lizard Gallery, where works by one of Queensland's finest artists, Margaret Worthington and handcrafted jewellery glistening with Central Queensland gemstones designed by Miranda Manifold can be viewed or purchased. Visitors to Gecko Valley Winery leave with a truly aural sensation and mementos of their encounter with the mystical creature that is wine.

After finding an unconventional home in Gecko Valley, the wine goddess glides elegantly to a more traditional location. As the cool mist rises from the vines of Waratah Vineyard, she embraces the cold, frosty scent of grapes and is entranced by their serenity. Her reaction is typical of those who visit Waratah Vineyard at Mungungo, 10 minutes from Monto.

Established in 1998 by Lynne Tucker and Max Lindsay, this award winning vineyard is situated in the Burnett Valley where the climate is typical with that of more well known wine regions throughout Australia. Although relatively new and small, this boutique winery can compete with the best of Australian wineries.

With the quiet trickle of Mondal Creek in the distance, the peaceful 3.2 hectare property is the perfect relaxed bush setting for visitors to take pleasure in the sensual notes created by consultant Viticulturalist and Winemaker Peter Scudamore-Smith using the Shiraz, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Black Muscat, Verdelho, Semillon, Marsanne and Viognier grapes. These wines are sure to entice the intoxicating wine goddess from the vines of the vineyard to warm the hearts of visitors.

For those that are unable to venture to the stunning locale and enjoy the kind country hospitality of Waratah Vineyard, the delicate bouquets can be purchased from outlets around the Gladstone Region, including Cania Gorge Big 4 Tourist Park near Monto, Cedar Galleries near Benaraby and the Garden Art Gallery at Agnes Water.

Has the wine goddess enchanted you? Are you ready to be swept away by her delicate perfume? If so, contact Gladstone Area Promotion and Development Limited on (07) 4972 4000 or [www.gladstoneregion.info](http://www.gladstoneregion.info) for further information.