

### ***The history...***

The Chesser Cellar arose from the complementing visions of Adelaide business man Mr J.V.S. Bowen and advertising executive Mr A.B. Kinnear.

Jim Bowen saw a place where locals and visitors alike could buy S.A.'s huge range of exciting wines without a "cellar door marathon." Bryce Kinnear dreamed of recreating the civilized atmosphere he had found in Fleet Street's 'El Vino' wine bar when he was an Australian Newspaper correspondent in London. They were joined by advertising executive Alan Martin and the first manager Alan Archer and in August 1964 opened the doors on a new South Australian Tradition.

### ***The building and it's furnishings..***

The restaurant was established in one of the many empty warehouses owned by the Wyatt Benevolent Trust in Chesser St Adelaide.

To recreate Kinnear's dream the bar was made from the cashier's counters of the old SA Gas Company's offices in King William Street and topped by an antique lift cage. Gas lights were installed in the main room with the iron work lamp at the front door produced by hills blacksmith Rick Howard. Jim Bowen determined on a carpeted floor as he noted the astonishingly civilizing effect this had on the clientele of one hotel bar he had visited.

The Hogarth Room upstairs was opened to encourage the civilized art of the private luncheon party. The magnificent dining suite, consisting of a massive English oak side board, buffet, table, two carvers and 12 leather chairs came from "Manoah" the Upper Sturt mansion of Sir Josiah Symon, Q.C. With Sir Josiah as host it is almost certain that key figures of the second and key constitutional conference in 1897 gathered around this table to declaim their differences on states rights and centralism. The collection of engravings by William Hogarth, a brilliant satirist of moral follies that adorn the walls lent to both the name and the spirit of the room.

### ***The wine license...***

The wine license was transferred from a wine bar owned by the Orlando Gramps at no 7 Hanson St (now Pulteney), a colourful establishment noted more for the volume of wine sold than for its atmosphere.

Three nearby hotels—The Freemasons in Pirie Street, the Astor in Gawler Place and the Sturt Arcade in Grenfell Street opposed the transfer of the license as they saw a threat to their trade, ironically, all three have since been demolished!

One of the conditions of the compromise reached before the hotels lifted their objection was that the Chesser Cellar was to only serve cold food. This led to the creation of Adelaide's most famous cold buffet, with rare roast beef, generous hams, tongue, brawn and other cold meats supported by increasingly innovative and delectably presented salads that was to earn The Chesser a special place in Adelaide's culinary history.

The Australian Wine license of the time also confined Chesser to nothing stronger than a port or sherry. This was quite popular in winter but the Adelaide summer called for a drink which could be cooled by ice and soda. This resulted in the creation of the celebrated Chesser Vermouths 1, 2 and 3. These refreshing, vermouth based drinks are still excitably drunk over the bar and bought by the flagon to be enjoyed at home!

The wine license also required that the doors be shut at 6.00 pm. At 5.00pm on that first day in August 1964 when a police sergeant called to see if any of his former clients from Hanson Street needed his

attention he found a new carpeted and civilized life had begun.....

### ***The story continues...***

After 17 years as a wine merchant, Primo Caon fulfilled a long ambition to buy the Chesser.

Primo and his brother Giocondo once ran two of the hottest places in town, first La Cantina in Hindley St and later Charlie Browns wine bar on Port Rd.

Primo quickly added his own touches such as opening an all day champagne bar with fresh S.A. Oysters as nibbles and Bollinger by the glass and opened Chessers for dinner on Friday and Saturday nights, all keeping within the original vision and history of the Chesser.

By now, Chesser's included a full a la carte menu for diners looking for a hot meal, complementing the cold buffet with dishes such as the steak and kidney pie, still served today!

The wine list had also grown and matured significantly featuring the finest of selected red and white varieties a myriad of aged whites, sherry's, ports and a daring selection of exotic spirits for the brave! All to be tasted by the glass over the bar, drunk by the bottle over lunch or ordered by the case to be sent home from Chesser's formidable cellar and retail bottle shop!

The Chesser continued to make an impact on Adelaide's social calendar with the introduction of the Chesser Vines Picnic. Held annually, the picnic saw Chesser Street transformed with wines freely flowing, bocce, live music, cabaret, face painting and of course Chessers now famous cold buffet for all to enjoy! The Chesser Vines Picnic celebrates its 10th year in 2004.

### ***Café chessers under the vines...***

In recent years the Chesser has seen more developments in keeping with the changing market trends.

Chessers spacious cellar was renovated to be another private but much larger dining area perfect for celebrations and corporate functions alike. The walls are still lined with bottle upon bottle of the Chessers vast collection, caricatures of the identities that called the Chesser their home, maps of grape growing areas and a little window right on street level to watch the world go by as you dine in style!

More recently was the renovation of the street level bottle shop into a café catering for quick lunches, coffee and muffins all day and of course the obligatory glass of house wine!

**The Chesser is now open for lunch Monday to Friday**, with the wine bar open from 5pm till late and caters for functions and group bookings of all types morning noon or night and weekends. It has become the home of many a club in Adelaide complemented by its "family" of loyal regulars and is a must for visitors to the region.