

## A 'pearfect' fest

By Alison O'Connor

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A feast of activities, including a giant pear competition, a pear bake-off and market stalls, will kick off the region's inaugural Pear Fest - a day to celebrate the Goulburn Valley's pears.

For too long, the pear has been bridesmaid to its local fruit cousins - the apples, cherries and peaches - who have all featured in local celebrations, so Goulburn Valley Women in Horticulture and Fruit Growers Victoria decided it was about time the pears had their time in the spotlight.

With 85 per cent of the nation's pears grown in the Goulburn Valley, organisers decided it was time to promote the versatility of pears.

"The Goulburn Valley is the largest pear growing area in Australia, but we are not well known for that," FGV administration manager Kath Boast said.

"We want to show consumers the versatility of pears, because the pear market doesn't do extremely well, so we want to change that perception and make people more aware of pears and how to use them."

Celebrity chef Janelle Bloom will be on-hand to whip up a number of different pear recipes, demonstrating to the audience how delicious pears can be in the kitchen.

"Janelle is going to show the audiences the diversity of pears and how they can be used in so many different ways in cooking," Ms Boast said.

"She will be making four recipes that will be quite different, which the audience can then taste, including a pear cake and a pear relish on scones."

Janelle will conduct two cooking demonstrations at Pear Fest - one at 11.30 am and another at 1.30 pm.

The 'giant pear competition' has already generated a great deal of interest and will be judged at 3 pm. Ms Boast said they had already received entries for a few "monster" pears, and they expected plenty more.

Shepparton's Pear Fest will be held on Easter Saturday, April 11, but a number of activities have been planned in the lead-up to the big day.



Celebration ... Fruit Growers Victoria administration manager Kath Boast is excited about the Pear Fest.

Orchard bus tours will be held on April 1 and April 8, while the `pear shaped' art exhibition will kick off on Friday.

"The orchard tours will give the public a chance to visit and experience first hand a working pear orchard," Ms Boast said.

"The art exhibition is being put on by the `splinters' who are a local artist's group here in Shepparton, so all the artists are local."

The free orchard bus tour will leave from FGV office in Mooroopna at 10 am and Shepparton East Football Ground for a four hour tour, including a barbecue lunch.

The art exhibition will be held from April 3 to May 10 at the Eastbank Centre in Shepparton.

For more information, phone 5825 3700 or go to **[www.pearfest.com.au](http://www.pearfest.com.au)**