

Aussie Time!

This Summer Season Brings Shrimp on the Barbie and Surprisingly Good Ozzie Wine

It's always this time of year that latent summer barbecue tendencies resurface. The shrimp-on-the-barbie skills are put to the test.

For those who don't have a backyard (that's most of us, natch), it's all about the roof terrace soiree with outdoor dinners. Sipping wine and listening to the hum of the city while the heat fades out of the day is a great New York thing.

But in my experience, any roof party worth its ribs usually has the food cooked on a grill by an Aussie. These natural cooks are the first to grab the tongs to make sure the tucker (food) isn't daggy (crappy).

Then I got to thinking about it. Our town has been invaded by an Aussie explosion lately. The happening movie-star A-list hanging out at NYC events is not a short one.

Russell Crowe sleeps downtown at 60 Thompson St. each time he's in town, and Nicole Kidman has bought

**SUSAN
REDSTONE**



Anyone who has been near a movie theater the past couple of weeks can't help but have come face-to-face with a big green Ozzie — Melbourne-born actor Eric Bana, who is the Hulk.

And guess what: I have a dirty little TV secret — I love Animal Planet. Earlier this year, when scenes of war were splashed daily on the tube, I watched a full half hour of Animal Planet before bed instead of CNN, guaranteeing a good night's sleep. Now I'm addicted to *The Crocodile Hunter Diaries* and all things outback.

But it just so happens that Australia's biggest export (besides Crowe and Foster's) is Australian wine.

At a recent luncheon, I learned that Ozzie wine sales have increased 48.5 percent from last year — with Shiraz leading the pack.

I'd always seen the Black Swan labels sitting on the shelf in the liquor store, smug in their perceived strength and bite, but I never really went there. I would grab some Italian instead.

But one day I took the plunge on some Black Swan Shiraz (\$8), which was fab.

If, like me, you are a connoisseur of finding delicious plonk (cheap wine) under \$10, add this to your shopping list: McWilliam's Hanwood Estate 2002 Shiraz for its deep burgundy hue and berry flavor.

And I even like the Black Swan 2002 Chardonnay, as it's more pear and peach than oak, and I'm neither a white wine nor Chardonnay drinker.

I think it's the combo of taste and price point, but these send

my mind way back to Queensland and a visit to the quaint surf spot Noosa Heads and the smell of seared Moreton Bay Bugs (the local jumbo shrimp) and sautéed Woolard Greens (a kind of outback Swiss chard).

Then I snap back to the reality and



Kylie's Got a Secret: Minogue knows Aussies are hot

a place in the new architecturally cool end of the Meatpacking District.

And let's face it, Nicole (whom I think is the chicest single person in the world) shows up to such major New York events as the Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute opening