

'Tis season to go nuts for festival



● The Whelan family — Rohan, Matilda, 6, Deanne and Harry, 8 — go gathering in their chestnut grove as the season gets into full swing ahead of next week's Wandiligong Nut Festival. Picture: MATTHEW SMITHWICK

BY ELIZA ADAMTHWAITE

DEANNE Whelan says an absolute blast of heat is the best way to roast chestnuts.

And that's what she'll be doing at next Saturday's Wandiligong Nut Festival.

The Wandiligong chestnut producer, who owns Growlers Creek Grove with her husband Rohan, will be roasting de coppi marone chestnuts over an open flame to achieve that tasty smokey flavour.

"You've got to score the nuts, otherwise they'll explode," Mrs Whelan said.

"Some people soak them in cold water for 10 minutes to soften the outer shell.

"But what chestnuts need is that absolute blast of heat.

"Then you roast them until the outer shells are blackened, wrap them in a tea towel or old woollen jumper to sweat them for a minutes.

"Peel them when they're hot. The good varieties should pop out of the shell."

Mrs Whelan and other local growers will be roasting and selling their chestnuts at Alpine Park in Wandiligong next Saturday where a market featuring walnuts, hazelnuts and other local produce will be held from 9am to 4pm.

Cooking demonstrations, children's games, an art marquee and a nut expo will top off the day.

This comes after a degustation dinner at Sole e Luna on Friday from 6.30pm. For bookings, phone (03) 5750 0861.

A historic walk around Wandiligong will follow on Sunday.

For more information about the Wandiligong Nut Festival, phone committee president Anthea Markowiak on (03) 5750 1440.

More about the Whelan family's chestnut harvest in today's *Country Mail*.

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