



Award-winners: The Lakeside Villas.



GREG BRIGGS

## A lifestyle with the best of all worlds



### CASE STUDY

**Who** Rollo and Linda Crittenden and their sons Oscar, 14, and Digby, 12 • **What** Family life among the vines of the Mornington Peninsula

**Loving life:** Linda and Rollo Crittenden run Dromana's Crittenden Estate and live in the nearby town of Mornington.

Rollo Crittenden was six when his pioneering parents Garry and Margaret planted their first grapes in Dromana on the Mornington Peninsula in the early 1980s.

An idyllic childhood followed – running among the vines, making rafts to catch eels in the lake and selling them to the local butcher for pocket money.

Today, that few acres of vineyard have grown to become the much-awarded, highly regarded Crittenden Estate, and the erstwhile eel catcher is now its general manager.

While the second-generation winemaker is a born-and-bred peninsula boy, his wife Linda moved her burgeoning corporate career from Camberwell to the coast and a life in the family business.

“Rollo couldn’t easily move the vineyard,” she laughs, relating the tale of their meeting and evolving relationship. “So, as we were getting more serious, I moved here.”

The couple and their sons Oscar and Digby live in nearby Mornington in a house Linda describes as their “perfect family home”.

“It was unrenovated when we bought it about 15 years ago,” she says. “We’ve just chipped away over the years and created something really homey.”

Their house reflects the family’s love of the region – the community, the beach vibe and, of course, the vineyards.

“Eating and drinking go hand-in-hand here,” Rollo says. “We’ve got a big open-plan area that opens onto a huge terrace with a wood-fired pizza oven.

“There are always people, always a bottle of wine out there.”

Their home is close to the children’s schools, friends and sports, as well as the waters of Port Phillip Bay.

“The pocket we’re in here has big, established trees. We’re surrounded by nature,” Linda says. “It feels almost like we’re on the vineyard.”

Work and life are warmly intertwined. At the estate, production of their signature pinot noir, chardonnay and savagnin has been bolstered by the sustainable farming methods implemented since the mid-2000s.

“The way we treat the land, its regeneration, its care, it’s all part of a wider whole,” Rollo says. “It’s in the way

we want to raise our kids and be a part of a community. We’re custodians here.”

Linda’s corporate career took a back seat to her new-found family business when their children arrived. “I was looking for something more flexible. The lure of the vineyard became too much.”

She now manages the estate’s gorgeous Lakeside Villas – three self-contained luxury lodges that project over the lake.

Rollo says Linda’s work on this part of their business, started by his mother, has been transformative, with the villas winning many awards of their own.

Everything seems to be appealingly circular here, with the glorious grape the rich centre. “The kids come into the winery, walk the vines, help with barrel work and ferments – we’re business focused, but it’s a family feel,” Rollo says.

The small, boutique, family-owned wineries of the Mornington Peninsula have this ethos in common. “We’re friends,” Linda says, and Rollo agrees. “We help each other out,” he says. “It’s a hallmark of wine families.”

[crittendenwines.com.au](http://crittendenwines.com.au)  
[lakesidevillas.com.au](http://lakesidevillas.com.au)