



SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2018

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IN THIS ISSUE: DAMIEN TSCHARKE | WISA IMPACT AWARDS | DAVID LEMIRE MW | 100 WINE REVIEWS





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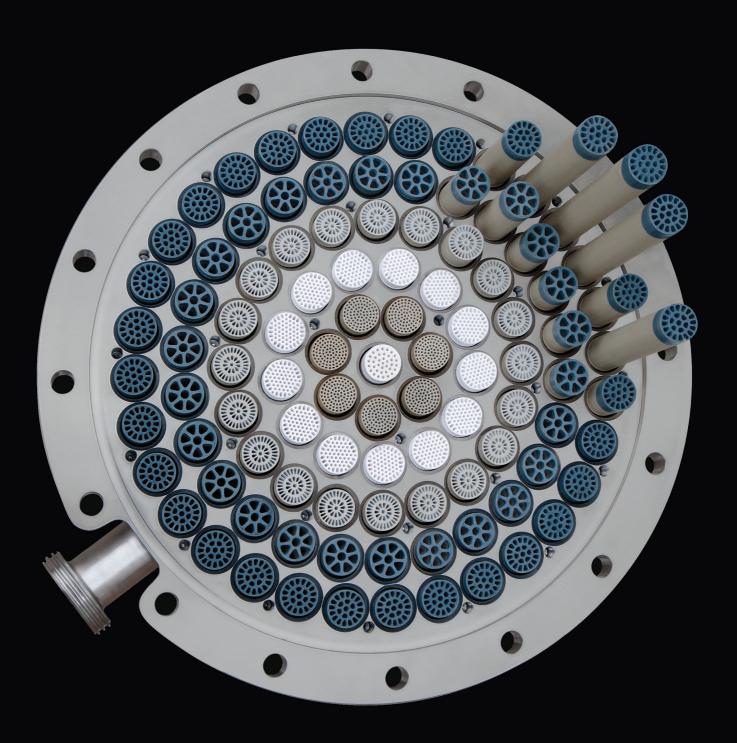








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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER EDITION



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Whether you know it or not, your wine brand has been in a solid relationship with Google for some time now. The search engine can do wonders for your business if you take control.

A NOSE FOR THE PARSON

WORDS ANTHONY MADIGAN

hen the 2017
Langhorne Creek
Wine Show awarded
gold medals to
Jacob's Creek 2016
Cabernet Sauvignon and Jacob's Creek 2016
Cabernet Merlot, Huon Hooke questioned
how the wines could have won gold when he
would have given them a bronze at best.

"The problem is that regional wine shows often award gold medals to wines that don't deserve them – wines that don't win gold medals in bigger shows where the competition is keener," Huon wrote on *The Real View*. "This could be because the judging is less stringent, or less competent, or it could be because there is subtle pressure on the judges to come up with some results that the locals can celebrate. Let's face it, no-one wants to frock up for an awards presentation dinner in the local hall if there are no trophies awarded."

Chapel Hill The Parson 2017 Cabernet

Sauvignon (\$18) from McLaren Vale won best Cabernet Sauvignon at the 2018 Sydney Royal Wine Show, beating the 'best' from Coonawarra, Margaret River and everything else. It's one for the people – straight out of The Castle.

Big show this time. Huon had another crack. "There should be a trophy for the luckiest wine of the show," he wrote. "If there was such a thing, the winner at the Sydney Royal Wine Show would be Chapel Hill The Parson 2017, which retails for \$18-\$20. Last year at the same show, Hardy's The Chronicles 7th Green Cabernet Sauvignon 2016, which was selling in the supermarkets for \$10.40, won the same award, making it arguably the luckiest wine of the 2017 show.

"One-year-old wines are beating older goldmedal Cabernets in trophy taste-offs, which is surely not encouraging what Len Evans used to call 'improving the breed'. Both of them are beautifully made wines, but they are minor wines, fruity but without much structure or complexity. They are 'flattering', as the French say, when young, and if that's what you like to drink, then you should probably buy a case or more, but they are not great Cabernets and they are not very serious wines."

A new book called Australasian Wine Form 2018 features 41,000 wine show scores including Thomas Wines Kiss Shiraz 2016, which scored 95 points at the Hunter Valley Wine Show and 85 points at the NSW Wine Awards. Seabrook Chairman Shiraz 2013 scored 95 points at the Australian Small Winemakers Show and 80 points at the Cowra Wine Show. There are 900 pages of discrepancies.

As long as there are grapevines in the ground, there will be arguments over wine show results. One thing is certain: consumers out there in the real world love Jacob's Creek. I know they will love The Parson. And surely what the consumer thinks is the only thing that matters. •



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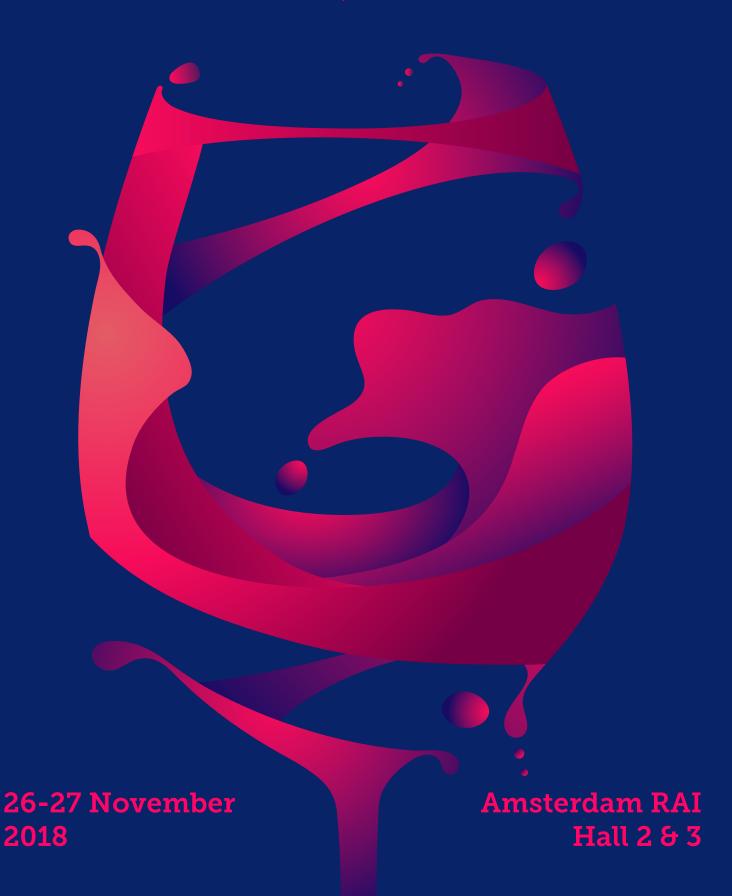


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WHY ARE WOMEN LEAVING THE WINE INDUSTRY?

Although the Australian wine industry has reached a stage where equal numbers of women and men are graduating from viticulture and winemaking, retaining women in the Australian wine industry is another story entirely. "Currently, participation rates in winemaking and viticulture are at just under 10 percent and - even more worryingly - are in decline," Jane Thomson of The Australian Women in Wine Awards says. "Most think that to increase the number of women in wine we need to work harder at attracting women into the industry. The reality is, we have little trouble attracting them, it's keeping and supporting women in their longterm wine career that's the challenge." Asked what practical steps employers and the industry at large could take to retain more women, Sarah Collingwood, winner of the 2017 Owner/Operator of the Year, said, "There are a few practical things that are already being done within the industry such as the Gender and Equality draft protocol that has been put out by WFA, ASVO's list of female wine judges and the formal (and informal) networks of women to support each other. While some of these initiatives will take time to percolate through the various systems and networks they are making a difference. Women are becoming more visible in the industry and this in turn is encouraging other women to step into positions and roles they otherwise may not have." The Australian Women in Wine Awards will raise awareness of this retention issue. They will be held in Sydney on Friday 16 November and will for the first time incorporate a symposium. WBM - Australia's Wine Business Magazine is a proud sponsor. womeninwineawards.com.au



GRAPE PRICES THE BEST THEY'VE BEEN FOR 10 YEARS

Australia's 2018 winegrape crush was 1.79 million tonnes, just above the long-term average of 1.76 million tonnes, and the average purchase price for winegrapes increased by eight percent to \$609 per tonne the highest level since 2008. Wine Australia CEO Andreas Clark said: "The increase in grape prices applied to both red and white grapes, with red grape prices increasing by 11 percent to \$768 a tonne while values for white varieties increased, on average, five percent to \$444 a tonne." Australian Vignerons CEO Anna Hooper welcomed the increase in price per tonne. "We hope to see the trend continue to ensure the sustainable pricing for winegrapes in the longer term as the recognition of Australia's wine quality proposition continues to grow," she said. The divergence between red and white average prices has increased steadily since 2011, driven by strengthening relative demand for red wine. Despite the higher prices, the total estimated value of the crush decreased by three percent to \$1.11 billion, reflecting the 10 percent reduction in total crop size from the record 2017 vintage of 1.99 million tonnes. The decline in tonnes compared with last year was greatest in percentage terms in the cool/temperate regions, which were down by 20 percent overall. The warm irrigated regions (Riverina, Murray Darling-Swan Hill and Riverland) were less affected by the drier spring and summer, with yields down just five percent.

... and the records tumble in Tassie

This year's winegrape harvest in Tasmania has set new records in both value and volume, according to Wine Tasmania. A record 16,280 tonnes were harvested and a record average price paid for Tasmanian winegrapes of \$2,977 per tonne. "Tasmania produced just 0.91 percent of Australia's total winegrapes but that represented 4.37 percent of its value," Wine Tasmania chief executive Sheralee Davies said. The 2018 vintage in Tasmania will be one to remember, "as the earliest, quickest and largest to date". The harvest started early for super-premium sparkling grapes, picked in mid-February, and proceeded at a quick pace due to warm weather and larger yields. Some wineries broke records for the largest crush in a single week. wbmonline.com.au



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EVENTS

Winery Engineering Association New Zealand Conference

When: 17-18 October 2018 Where: 18th Napier War Memorial Conference Centre

www.wea.org.au

WISA Wine Industry Impact Conference

When: 18 October 2018 Where: Hotel Grand Chancellor, Adelaide www.wisa.org.au

WISA Wine Industry Impact Awards Dinner

When: 18 October 2018 Where: Adelaide Town Hall www.wisa.org.au

Australian Women in Wine Awards & Symposium

When: 16 November 2018 Where: Quay Restaurant, Sydney www.womeninwineawards.com.au

Vinitech Sifel

When: 20-22 November 2018 Where: Bordeaux Exhibition Centre www.vinitech-sifel.com/en

World Bulk Wine Exhibition

When: 26-27 November 2018 Where: Amsterdam RAI www.worldbulkwine.com/en/

Australian Wine Industry Technical Conference & Trade Exhibition

When: 21-24 July 2019 Where: Adelaide Exhibition Centre www.awitc.com.au

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Balance in wine is critical, and we also need to get the balance right when it comes to time spent planning and working out the end game.

WORDS DAVID LEMIRE MW

ne of my wine industry colleagues who I have much admiration for is a great believer in balance being among the most important qualities for a young wine to have. "If it's balanced at a young age, that's a great sign for ageing," and "if it's not balanced when it's young, it will never be balanced," are views that have plenty of currency. In the case of my colleague, I have been tempted to ask him about one of his revered wines, the 1961 Gaja Barbaresco, which spent some 90 days on skins – was that wine balanced in 1962? But I suppose it could be a case of the exception proving the rule.

Balance is the one quality parameter that applies to wines of all styles and price points. We don't ask of a pure young Mosel Kabinett that it be complex, or expect great length of flavour from a juicy young Yarra Valley Gamay. We don't expect intensity of flavour to be a hallmark of a delicious, quaffable Muscadet. But we do expect all of them to

have balance, just as much as we expect it of Grand Cru Classé Bordeaux. (For a delicious example of a balanced young wine, which is about drinkability rather than huge intensity or concentration, check out the new 2017 Giant Steps Yarra Valley Chardonnay.)

Balance, though, is not just a concept useful to understanding vines and wines. It's also a great way to look at parts of our businesses to 'sense check' our business structures and plans. I've talked in these pages about high-density viticulture, and how I see this, and higher quality viticulture in general, as being the next frontier that will drive quality Australian wines to another level. We are already seeing the results from some of the early adopters like Bass Philip, Bindi and Serrat.

But investing in this sort of labour and cost intensive viticulture will only be successful if the wine can be sold at a premium to justify the extra investment in equipment, labour and vineyard establishment. So the balance needs to be there from the outset, between

BALANCE

the vineyard investment, the volume, the price and the marketing investment. Trade customers want to see a balance between the price and the quality, and between their margin and the effort they need to put into selling the wine. The annals of ambition without planning are littered with wine brands that over-invested in production and under-invested in marketing. Penfold's may be making a few mistakes, but under-investing in marketing isn't one of them.

One of the challenges is that most of the time there is no right or wrong answer. How should we work out what the right balance is in our time investment in domestic wholesale trade sales, direct to consumer sales or export sales? It's going to be different for everyone, but whatever the channel we focus on, if we have clarity of purpose about our main game, it will help us find the balance to get the best results.

Consider Brokenwood's investment in its new cellar door building. A significant investment, but in balance with a business that is well positioned to take advantage of to sell direct to consumer and get value from that investment.

If, for example, we have a brand where we are focusing on on-premise, with pursuing and funding by-the-glass listings a key focus, then our packaging, pricing, deal structures, volumes, choice of distributor and marketing spend, should all fit the goal of on-premise listings. Getting those elements aligned is to find balance for that brand. That doesn't mean it won't have success in retail, but we might need to be careful that retail exposure doesn't compromise the balance that we've sought in on-premise.

Increasingly the market is becoming more fragmented. Wines that can cross over different channels are becoming less common as each business type looks for the wines and brands that fit their needs. And what fits the needs of Coles or Dan Murphy's or Tesco is not going to fit the needs of Fix Wine Bar or the City Wine Shop or Noble Rot.

The biggest balancing act for us all, given the limited time we have in our lives, is between time invested and return on that investment. And the biggest impediment, to my mind, is a lack of balance in the time spent planning, and working out the end game, compared to the time spent executing and fixing mistakes caused by a lack of planning.

Doing Twice the Work in Half the Time where the producers of the PALM devices (predecessors of smart phones) analysed how long it took for the coders to fix a bug if they fixed it straight away, compared to how long it

took if they did it a few weeks later. It would make sense if it took longer doing it later, as the work was no longer fresh, and it would take time to pull the threads together of that work. Twice as long, maybe... three times? They found that it took 24 times as long to fix the code several weeks later than if it were fixed on the same day.

If we think about our brands and the plans we have for them, and accept that each decision takes us along the right track or deviates from it, we can get a sense of the way a misalignment in packaging, pricing, volume, distributor, style, and so on, is like that coding error. If we get that balance right at the start, it will stop us from letting mistakes compound and severely compromise our results.

One way to avoid these mistakes is a tip from one of the founders of the fast-growing gin brand, Four Pillars. "Write a letter to yourself from the future about what the brand looks like in five years' time." That letter should tell you how much you're selling, at what price, in what channels, of what product mix. If you have a clear idea of all these things when you start out, you have a way to screen all your decisions along the way.

Will this label/product/distributor get me closer to that reality or take me further away from it?

Does the investment I'm making now balance the returns I'm going to be getting if I get to that position?

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HAPPY

WORDS KATIE SPAIN PHOTOS MIKE SMITH

UNDERGROUND







lot happened in 1990. The demolition of the Berlin Wall began, Nelson Mandela was released from prison, Tim Berners-Lee published a formal proposal for the World Wide Web, and Australia won 52 gold medals and finished on top in the Commonwealth Games. Meanwhile, in the Barossa, a lanky 11-year-old redhead flashed a toothy grin and raised a silver trophy high. He was the winner of the region's annual Primary School Pruning Championship and his photo was printed in the local rag. "Here I was in The Leader with two older mentor pruners either side of me," Damien Tscharke says. "My trophy was a beer stein!"

The youngster had to win. His father told him so in no uncertain terms. "Dad won it when he was the same age as I was – that was during The Depression. I had a stern talking to the night before the competition. I had to do Marananga proud."

Damien had no shortage of practice. Pruning lessons were part of his school's curriculum. "When I was in grade six we'd jump in the back of the teacher's car, drive to what is now Langmeil Estate at Tanunda and these old grapegrowers would mentor us in modern spur pruning lessons."

Damien's father worked in the B Seppelt &

Sons vineyards and after school he'd help prune the old bush vines. "I never got the money I earned... it went towards the family." Pruning was just part of life. "Growing up, you don't know any different. It was just hard work and it was what we did but it was no doubt very influential in the path I took."

Three decades later Damien owns
Tscharke, a western Barossa winery focused
on sustainable grapegrowing and sensitive
winemaking. Of the 200 acres of land he and
his German wife Eva own, 85 acres is under
vines. The certified organic vineyards span
three sites, all within three kilometres of each
other. The vines are where Damien's heart
lies. They always have been.

In 2004 he was awarded the prestigious Peter Olson Fellowship for Innovation and Outstanding Performance in Agriculture and now, he's on a mission to raise the bar in progressive and sustainable winemaking practices. Three small children and light bulb ideas usually keep him up at night, but lately his head has been buried underground.

"Come on, I'll show you."

It's cold down here in Tscharke's new cellar. A cool 12 degrees to be exact. The 50 by 25 metre cavern has the capacity to hold a thousand barrels. "At the moment we've got about 850 rolling around," he says. Each one of them was produced from oak seasoned

and coopered in France. The cellar walls weep, like the gentle, rugged slopes of Marananga are crying.

Damien designed the cellar in an effort to create a more noble path in winemaking.

"Viticulturally, our industry has come so far in improving practices, clonal selection, varietal selection, site selection and understanding how to grow better fruit. I think vinification in our wineries today is probably some of the best in the world – being able to really capture the essence of the quality that we grow viticulturally."

"One of the biggest motivators in life I ever had was growing up on a farm where we had nothing."

Damien adapted his winemaking facilities to do the same. Everything is done in situ. "I had the land on which we grow grapes, and a wonderful winery, but we didn't have a cellar. I had a tin shed with air conditioners. In our climate, going underground was really the only long-term approach that was going to work successfully for us. Most of the wine's life is undergone during élevage. Terroir and regionality ends the moment we pick the grapes and then it's in a very controlled, artificial sort of space."





He wanted to do things differently. "I don't want my kids to look back in 20 years' time and say, 'Papa, when you grew these grapes how were you manipulating the environment?"

In 2014, he built an alternative. "I looked at it on a bigger scale and thought, 'How would I achieve something if refrigeration wasn't an option?' Us Australians get a bit lazy - it's in our blood. We often want to find cheap or easy workarounds." He did the opposite and designed a cellar based on the features used by early settlers. "The idea was that we would allow for the winter rainfall to come through." Alcoves function as weep holes, specially engineered for the hydraulic force of the water building up behind the walls. "The cellar is designed as a bit of a living, breathing organism in the way that it allows what is happening externally to pass through the cellar. It becomes its own terroir unique to Marananga - with the way it lets the rainfall come through and the groundwater come up. It's as natural down here in the way we age our wines as it is the way in which we grow our grapes."

An Ag drain skirts the interior, allowing for water to drain into a sump pump. "We are 10 to 15 metres off the underground aquifers here and the barrels sit at five metres below ground level. On the gravel (under the barrels) we have a lot of loam which helps

draw up our groundwater so we can retain the humidity in here. At the height of summer when it's dry and hottest we're still above 50 percent."

The biggest win has been the ability to reduce the amount of evaporation. They've gone from 11 percent to below four percent. Damien hopes to see the benefits reflected in the bottles, too.

"My barrels were lasting six years and then we were writing them off. You're lucky to see 10 years out of a barrel and that's stretching it. We're fairly confident that the conditions down here are desirable to be able to see red wine produced for more than a generation in oak. I'm optimistic that with some of our wines we'll show the vineyards from which the fruit has been sourced for generations, but also the same oak that we've been using for more than a generation of winemaking."

Looking out over the barrels, vats and a concrete egg (for Grenache Blanc) is a horseshoe-shaped acrylic bar. It seats 10 and was created exclusively for Tscharke's Underground Club members as a way to say thank you. It is strictly invitation only. Many lucky visitors are customers from the early days when Damien was making wine and doing tastings out of a tin shed.

"The success that I've had is off the back of those people who have backed me. Every year they keep coming back and buying the wine."

The bar is illuminated. "My favourite variety is Grenache. Often when we're looking and observing quality, we're quantifying it with colour. I love the colour and luminance it can give when you provide a light source underneath, it's almost like it comes to life."

Invitation to the Underground Club is a bit like Willy Wonka's golden ticket, minus the chocolate. A gold canister arrives on the doorstep of prospective members. Inside, there's a little silver shield and Tscharke's 10 commandments. "There's no cost and no strings attached, just a few in-house rules. Some people have come multiple times and bring their friends who are like 'How the hell do we get in here?""

For the rest, there's an equally impressive cellar door. The European-style structure, called Tscharke's Place, was built in 2011. It was designed by Eva and Damien and shipped over from Germany. It took two years of planning and 14 months to complete. "The building is the length of two 40-foot shipping containers," Damien says. "The largest single component had to be able to fit within the length of a 40-foot shipping container. They had top-loading containers so rather than having a door on the end they dropped the beams in from the top.

"In Europe the buildings take on more character as they age. We wanted something

that was significant to our ancestry, a reflection of who we are as people, but also more spectacular than the day we opened it when Jana or the other children are one day working there. That's my plan."

The cellar door includes a private tasting room but demand soon outgrew it.

"We'd get slammed. Cellar door got so busy it was booked out every weekend and on a busy day there might have been three or four groups with people standing three deep at the bar. I just wasn't able to give them the love they deserve. We've been on this journey together – from the very beginning."

The new bar was built for those people.

"Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life... that's bullshit."

It was enough to give his accountant and bank manager a coronary. "I knew it was going to be a tough ask to get them to lend me the money given that they weren't lending me money to buy more land – there wasn't equity to secure the loan."

He pauses. "The accountant wasn't really on-side because I was spending all this money and I wasn't going to grow any more grapes. I wasn't increasing productivity but I'm confident that we can capitalise on having these assets for generations to come. I'm not motivated by money or someone telling me what to do. I just love it."

Damien eventually convinced his financial institution to jump on board. "I said, 'It's all well and good to get the numbers to balance the books but at the end of the day the success of this investment, whether or not you lend the money, is dependent on the people you're lending to."

He looks out of his office window onto five-year-old Albariño vines.

"I didn't want to be a grapegrower. We never had any money." He laughs. "I was very observant when I was delivering grapes to wineries (a majority of our fruit went to Rockford and Peter Lehmann). For years I'd always see the winemakers with the newest cars and they never seemed to be around on the weekends. I thought, "They're living the dream."

He kicked things off in 1998 when he established a Tempranillo vineyard on the

Gnadenfrei property. Two years later he completed a Bachelor of Agricultural Science degree (with honours) in viticulture. "My father was against the whole idea of me going to university because he figured I'd become a bum for four years of my life. My mother just said, 'Go for it. Do it. We've worked hard our whole life and have nothing to show for it.""

The winemaking side of his business started in 2001 with a crush of 20 tonne. "That was a venture I took on myself. My family knew nothing about winemakers. My father was of the attitude that 'we're grapegrowers, not winemakers so stick to what you know."

He sold his two motorbikes, the only assets he had, and put the money towards a little half-tonne per hour electric crusher/ de-stemmers and a little basket press. "I wrote a business plan (which I still have) and went to the bank that our family had been with for generations. I think they thought it was cute and laughed at me. They needed some security (which I didn't have because we didn't own any land at the time and my parents had never borrowed money) so I said, 'Give me four years and let me use the family farm as security to borrow \$100,000. After four years if I can't release the property as security it's only \$100,000. I'm young, I'll get a job and I'll pay back the debt."

He's been borrowing money ever since. "And I'm still working seven days a week!" He laughs. "What do they say? Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life... that's bullshit."

Hard work aside, job satisfaction doesn't get better than this.

"I'm just the custodian for a short period of time. For me, it's not about creating a return on investment in four years, it's creating resources for future generations to build on. If we are going to truly forge our way forward we have to take the big leaps. We have to take big steps that are creating foundations that will help underpin the industry for the next 100 years."

In order to understand Damien's deep, humble, forward-thinking nature, it's important to wind the clock back. "My wife once said to me, 'Damien, it's like you grew up 100 years ago."" He smiles because it's true.

The Tscharke family was one of the first to settle in the region in the mid-1800s. Their grapegrowing history runs deep. Damien's

Certified organic

NASAA certification was a huge milestone but Damien doesn't push it in marketing or promotion. "It's the inevitable. Our industry is undergoing a lot of challenges because our dependence on some of the inputs of viticulture aren't working or sustainable. We'll get to a point where chemicals are no longer safe or certainly not a reliable tool to deal with some of our viticultural practices. I believe it's not motivated by a trend in the marketplace who want organic. We can just see that the sooner we adapt, the better. Also, I don't want to be labeled like that or it becomes your point of difference. What happens in the next 10 years when that category is just going to grow wider? By 2020... 70 percent of the workforce will be millennials and they will expect to be buying organically. Yes, it's a box that we tick but I don't want it to become our only point of difference." He says it's complicated. "Unfortunately when people think organic, they think sustainable. It's a part of the matrix. It's very complex and a lot of organic producers out there aren't sustainable."

The selling game

"We are pretty much focused on direct channels. Everything we do in wholesale has just been momentum that's building from cellar door or residual traction from the days when I used to work for trade. When you talk about direct today there are so many paths: digital strategy, working with e-commerce (we're building a new website with a company in Wellington), and communication and integration with point of sale (we've got e-commerce and a group of people who just want to deal with us on the phone), word of mouth, the newsletter, the cellar door experience and of course the Underground members. So we've got all of these channels." The cellar door team, led by Diane Thompson, is the face of the business. "I'm not. They play a very critical role and are the conduit between us here in the back end and the consuming end. It's vital that they know the business inside out. You know you've got a great cellar door when people who come to the bar to do a tasting ask you how they can get a job here."



parents ran a pig breeding and poultry farm with vines on it. His father Glen worked a fulltime job at B Seppelt & Sons to help make ends meet. Glen was the eldest of 10 children and hard work was in his blood. "My father was a bit more old school, very conservative and of that generation where there wasn't a lot of healthy communication as a family."

Damien's four sisters Kerry, Kirsty, Katrina and Kylie were the apple of his father's eye. "I wasn't. My father just called me Boy."

Farm life shaped the person Damien is today. "One of the biggest motivators in life I ever had was growing up on a farm where we

ever had was growing up on a farm where we had nothing. Mum and Dad always provided a meal on the table and kept us warm. We had the necessities for life but not one thing more." Their school clothes were purchased from Truro's Red Cross hall. "Nothing ever fit perfectly but that's your world... you don't know any different."

Damien describes his mother Margaret as the rock of the family. "She's an amazing woman. She grew up in Williamstown and my father grew up here in Marananga."

MARANANGA SLOW DOWN

Consuming wine was never part of the family's lifestyle. "I didn't have an appreciation of wine and my father doesn't drink any alcohol so it wasn't a passion for wine that got me into the industry, more knowing that I was so committed and supportive of the family farm. I was lucky to be of a generation where I could extend my education and enrol to study winemaking. I figured I just wanted to get myself out of the vineyards and more into a role that had better prospects. That education broke down the mysteries behind wine and what it took to produce a bottle of wine. At the same time, my studies opened my prospects to the opportunities we had in exploring different practices, different varietals, and doing things differently to improve our performance as grapegrowers."

Eventually, his palate developed and he grew to love wine. "So then I had the knowhow but not the equipment." So, he made wine in a tin shed. "My first vintage was down around the pit from which my grandfather used to service the Bedford trucks. I'd syphon wine out of our kegs – we had eight – through a half-inch hose and into buckets, bucketing it from one barrel to the next. Every year, through pure determination, I thought 'we can do better than that – the winemaking has let the fruit down.'

He persevered. Often jumping the back fence to borrow Dave Powell's equipment. "We had nothing during my first two years. I'd run over to Torbreck and he'd let me use his little boutique crusher/de-stemmer. He was a very generous man."

Damien started small, planting and pioneering new Mediterranean varietals and making cleanskin wines. "I hadn't thought about the marketing side of things. It was only when those vineyards had come into production and fruition that I really wanted to put my family name on the bottle – to associate us as growers with those varietals. I had another label (Glaymond) that we produced our more classic offerings under."

He is an example of what an extreme grapegrower can achieve.

"Today, I have the opportunity to take my grapes to the next level and preserve them as wine so that I'm not confined to having to sell my grapes during the few weeks of vintage. As a grower I've had to learn really quickly how to make wine. A lot of that has been self-taught."

He had some pretty impressive sounding boards

"I was really lucky that we delivered so much fruit to Rockford Wines. I still think the industry has so many humble characters like Robert O'Callaghan and Chris Ringland – I'd rock up to deliver grapes and would take samples of my wine in because I had no idea what I was doing. I'd say. 'Is this good?'

"I'd go in to Rockford Wines and Chris would drag me into the back shed, taste the wines with me and give me that reassurance and send me on my way again. He was probably just pumping up my tyres!" Damien laughs. "I feel like they're the people who really

"Becoming a father was more influential in how I run this business than the GFC."

give you that leg-up. The ones who say, 'Have a crack, just give it a go.' Not, 'There's too many winemakers' or 'too many people doing their own thing'. It was absolutely the opposite."

Two of Damien's most influential mentors had nothing to do with the industry. One was Eric Paynter, a family friend who lived near Port Augusta. "He taught me a lot of lessons in life that I probably wouldn't have learnt if I hadn't been plucked out of my life at home and taken under his wing." The other was Chris Clayton, a drifter from Queensland who had the gift of the gab. "He was a random guy, a registered nurse but an entrepreneur. Whenever I'd see him I'd just sit down and sound him out about what he'd been doing and all his innovative ways of thinking and seeing life. He had more of a business mind."

Damien looks thoughtful. "Maybe that helped to give me the ability to see things a little bit more from the outside in, rather than being under the pressure of how do I fix this and how do I fix that. Being more proactive than reactive."

Now 39, Damien has a family and life experience of his own. He met Eva (a backpacker at the time) in 2005. Over the next five years they acquired a 20-acre block along the Greenock Creek in Seppeltsfield, built the new winery facility alongside the existing winery on their Stone Well property, and purchased the additional neighbouring land (increasing the size to a 50 acre holding). The first of their three children arrived in 2012.

SCREEN PRINTING AFTER BOTTLING

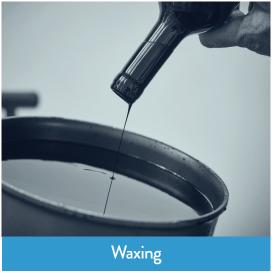
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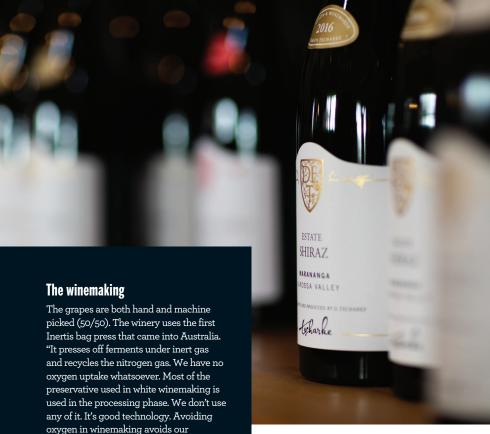














oxygen in winemaking avoids our dependence on sulphur." Production-wise, it varies. "We do some contract stuff as well but this year we did 250 tonne. There's a need to do contract winemaking. I'm trying to slowly phase that out because we

have been challenged in some years. 2017 was hard because we were understaffed and did way too much but we got through it." The Tscharke team harvests all of their water. "All the storm water from this building, the car park, and everything underground is pumped up into our lagoon," Damien says. "We collect about three million litres of water a year and I've integrated all of our storm water management with our winery effluent. The only thing that leaves our gates is what's in the bottle. Any water we use throughout the winery is not wasted. It passes through the winery and is used again for supplementary irrigation. Everything has irrigation. Some years some blocks wouldn't be irrigated and in other years we rely on it. We rely on the premise that if

you're healthy you are less likely to fall sick

supplementary irrigation, we don't irrigate to grow more grapes. It's like people, you

or be vulnerable to infection than when

you're weak or run down. Plants are the

same. Our best wines come from our

healthiest vineyards so we irrigate as

can't give them less and expect more."

Hints of their pint-sized entourage are dotted throughout the winery. Glittery finger paintings pinned to the office walls, a toy tractor in the cellar, and bright painted car park markers out front of cellar door (Jana's handiwork). Damien's German wife Eva is a talented ceramicist and her handcrafted pottery is available at Tscharke's Place. It's a creative place. Even the new toilets (Scheißhaus) are a work of German-inspired art.

"How does the saying go? Behind every great man is an even greater woman. That's certainly the case. I could not have done it without her. She's been with me for the whole journey. I'm the one who always takes on too much... bite off more than I can chew then chew like hell."

The cellar was specifically made to be family-friendly so Damien and Eva can work while their children Jana, Philip and Inka (aged six, three and one) play. Damien's sister Kylie Bond also works in the winery. "We spend so much time at work," Damien says. "I don't separate and choose - as in 'this is my job, that's family and we'll take time off to spend together.' It's a lifestyle. My kids are going to remember growing up in here and

playing hide and seek in the cellar. Running around. If they're going to want to do it they're going to have to have an appreciation of what it takes and what it involves. It's not nine-tofive. It's a life and you're committed to it."

Being a dad changed how he thinks.

"Becoming a father was more influential in how I run this business than the GFC. You see values differently. It prioritises things in your life. When you've got no one depending on you, or it's just you and your wife you think, 'we'll be alright, we're healthy' - and you go hard. When you have kids you realise how much of your life you sacrifice when you are self-employed. After having kids we pretty much re-wrote the rules. My greatest achievement has been my kids."

The appointment of winemaker Damian Boyle (previously at Grant Burge) in August 2018 marked a new chapter for Tscharke. It frees Damien up to do what he does best turning crazy light bulb moments (moderated by Eva) into reality.

"In winemaking I've lived a bit of a sheltered life. It's been really exciting for me to bolster my winemaking ability by having someone alongside to help drive that agenda. I don't



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want to fall into the rut of doing the same thing 18 years over. You never get to do the same vintage twice but imagine having another winemaker who has a whole different gamut of experiences... It's like doubling your experience and knowledge."

It's all about integrity. "And trying to create an approach to grapegrowing and winemaking that can withstand the test of time. I'm caught up in a moment of time where I think about what's happening and what's trendy in winemaking... what do consumers want to have? But as a producer we can't chop and change every day. We have to find a style and approach that can withstand all of those fashions and consistently deliver because it's easy to be a one hit wonder in our industry."

What of the future?

"So much of my thought is around where the wine community as a whole will be in the next five to 10 years. Where will we fit in with that? Ultimately I hope my greatest asset won't be my cellar or my vineyards, it will be my brand. How do you create and build a desirable label where I don't sell it, people just buy it."

New releases include the 2017 The Master Montepulciano, 2017 Bed Hair Graciano, 2018 Estate Rosé, 2017 Estate Grenache/Mataro, the 2017 Stone Well Vineyard Mataro, 2017 Only Son Tempranillo, 2016 Estate Shiraz, and the 2018 Eva (Gewürztraminer) Frizzante. They're all priced between \$10 and \$20. It's hardly bank-breaking stuff and Damien wants to keep it that way.

"Our pricing I believe is very modest but is a demonstration of our successful sustainable model. I make better wines today than I believe I ever have before and they are at their most accessible price point ever."

Sustainable farming practices, lightweight packaging, longer lasting barrels, and making energy redundant are part of that. "All these things just improve our performance and the consumers are able to realise those savings as well."

Consumers are more discerning than ever before.

"They don't rely on a price point to determine a great wine. They know they can buy great wine at any price point, whether it's \$10 up to \$50. It's a competitive category. You can drink a \$50 bottle of wine every night of the year and you won't drink the same wine twice. We are very lucky where I can present a wine where people don't look at it and think, 'it's cheap, I don't want that, I only want the good stuff.' They drink the wine and then ask us 'How do you make such a great wine at that price point?' If you want to encourage people to come back and buy your wine again and again don't let price be that hurdle. When people come to cellar door we only charge for what's in the glass - the tangible qualities. All that romance, the warm fuzzy feeling you have when you enjoy a glass of wine... I can give you that for free."

The focus is on experience.

"Whether it's the experience on the website, the experience when people visit us, the experience when people drink the wine and what comes to mind when they do. How do we direct and encourage that in a direction that we feel will meet our aspirations for the brand going forward? We think about that a lot."

Damien looks at the tarnished pruning trophy from his childhood.

"I don't see us growing a lot in terms of where our production is at. It's a lovely size. We're not too big that I'm removed from doing what I love and it's a great quality of life in which to have a family."

With 18 vintages under his belt, there's no Schadenfreude here, just a focus on doing the right thing by the environment, the wine, and generations to come.

"We've got a great skillset. We just go hard and don't worry too much about what other people are doing. We give it our best. Our ability to make better wine is yet to be realised. That will happen and I'm excited about where that's going." ◆

tscharke.com.au

The vines

Ryecorn grows between each row of vines. "All of our vineyards are 100 percent under vine mulched. We don't buy in straw mulch because that's taking organic carbon from the farmers who should probably be putting it back into their own soil." Damien believes more wisdom should be applied to adapting to a landscape. "I view our land as big solar panels. We harness all of the sun's energy and we grow all of our own organic carbon. We built a machine that can cut the ryecorn off at the ground and puts it under the vines so we get 100 percent cover. We work on floatation, our tractors all have high power to weight ratios and it's all about working with our natural resources in the vineyard." Planting is rotated every year on a minimum three-year cycle before reverting back to the same species. "I look at it this year and despite how dry it's been, how successful our crop has been. I look at some properties and I think 'Have you thought about the land on which you're farming?' So much of that knowledge and wisdom has been lost because we are so influenced by agronomists or people telling us we need a product and you need to do this and do that as opposed to adapting to our climate. Adapting is much more than just growing the right varieties or the right clones or rootstocks on your soil."

The Underground Club

Membership to the Underground Club is free and by invitation only. It's also the only way you'll get to sit at the underground bar for a private two-and-ahalf-hour tasting (complete with mohair knee rugs for the 12-degree chills). It's not about being wanky or elitist. It's for good people with a genuine support for the brand and its values. "The good thing is we don't just hand it out like candy. There's that exclusivity. We've got strategy around that which is how we track all of that." Members come from all over the globe. "We don't discriminate on where you're from. If we can see that you quickly relate to our core values, appreciate what we do and think you could be a great ambassador for us. You might be in a situation where six months of the year you're working in Hong Kong and for six months of the year you're in London. You're originally from Adelaide and you've just come here because you're back home, catching up with friends and you like wine. You're not going to buy any wine - I appreciate that, but give you five years' time and you're probably going to be cashed up and you'll remember this and love us. We want to be a multigenerational brand." It's not about the spend. "Some people have lots of money but they're hard to deal with. If they're high maintenance they're probably not going to be good brand ambassadors or enjoyable to taste with. So we rely on the front end of the business to be the filter. Members are all likeable people. We've got hundreds now... they're all really good people who we know on a first name basis. Good people hang out with good people."



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VALUE A VICTORY

One of the most important stats behind the resurgence of Australian wine exports is that the average value per litre has increased by 10 percent to a record \$5.94.

WORDS PETER BAILEY, WINE AUSTRALIA

n 2017-18, the value of Australian bottled wine exports increased by 19 percent to hit a decade high of \$2.2 billion. Bottled exports accounted for 81 percent of the total value of Australian exports during the year. The increase in the value of bottled exports was due to growth in both volume and average value. Volume increased by eight percent to 376 million litres while the average value per litre increased at a faster rate, by 10 percent to a record \$5.94 per litre. The average value has increased for eight consecutive years (see Figure 1).

The growth in the average value per litre is partially due to strong export growth at higher price points. Figure 2 shows that the fastest growing and the biggest segment by value is \$10 per litre and over. The value of exports in this segment grew by 45 percent to a record \$855 million. In the past five years, exports at \$10 per litre and over have almost trebled, driven by increased demand for Australian premium wines around the world, particularly in destinations such as China, Singapore, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Malaysia, Japan and the United Arab Emirates.

Most of the major bottled categories recorded growth. Red bottled exports increased by the strongest rate, up 24 percent to \$1.8 billion. White exports increased by five percent to \$379 million, sparkling grew by five percent to \$48 million and fortified by nine percent to \$5.5 million.

Bottled exports can be analysed by the Geographical Indication (GI) claimed on the label. The two biggest GI label claims are South Australia and South Eastern Australia. Exports labelled as South Australia increased by 68 percent to \$610 million while South Eastern Australia exports declined by 14 percent to \$501 million.

Exports from other GIs are all significantly lower in value. The third and fourth biggest are Barossa (up 25 percent to \$149 million)

and McLaren Vale (up six percent to \$81 million). Others to grow with exports values of more than \$10 million include Coonawarra (up 84 percent to \$49 million), Margaret River (up four percent to \$30 million), Clare Valley (up three percent to \$25 million), Adelaide Hills (up 23 percent to \$20 million), Limestone Coast (up 39 percent to \$18 million), Yarra Valley (up two percent to \$18 million), Langhorne Creek (up 13 percent to \$18 million) and Heathcote (up 24 percent to \$11 million).

Regions with exports worth less than \$10 million per annum that enjoyed double-digit growth included Eden Valley, Tasmania,



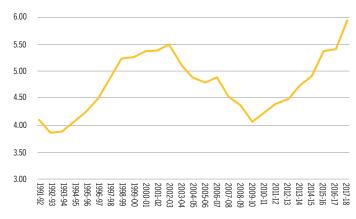
Riverina, Adelaide, Hunter Valley, Pyrenees, Frankland River, Nagambie Lakes, Orange and Mornington Peninsula.

Wines with the South Australia label claim have a very healthy average value of \$10 per litre FOB. In comparison, wines with a South Eastern Australia label claim have an average value of \$3.44 per litre FOB. (see Figure 3).

Barossa Valley wines have the highest average value at \$18.23 per litre FOB, ahead of the Pyrenees (\$17.19) and Eden Valley (\$16.56). There are numerous regions averaging more than \$10 per litre including Heathcote, Tasmania, Yarra Valley, Coonawarra, Nagambie Lakes, Margaret River, McLaren Vale and Hunter Valley.

Wine Australia's Export Report provides an overview of some of the key data sets so that Australian wine businesses can make informed decisions about export opportunities. However, the base report is just a starting point. Winegrape levy payers and exporters can create an account on www. wineaustralia.com to access further insights for free or contact our Market Insights team (market.insights@wineaustralia.com) for further information. •

FIGURE 1: AVERAGE VALUE PER LITRE OF AUSTRALIAN BOTTLED WINE EXPORTS



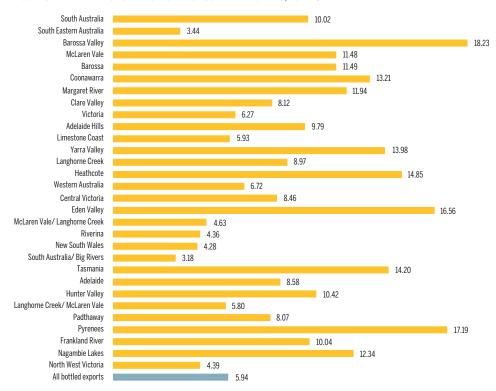
Source: Wine Australia

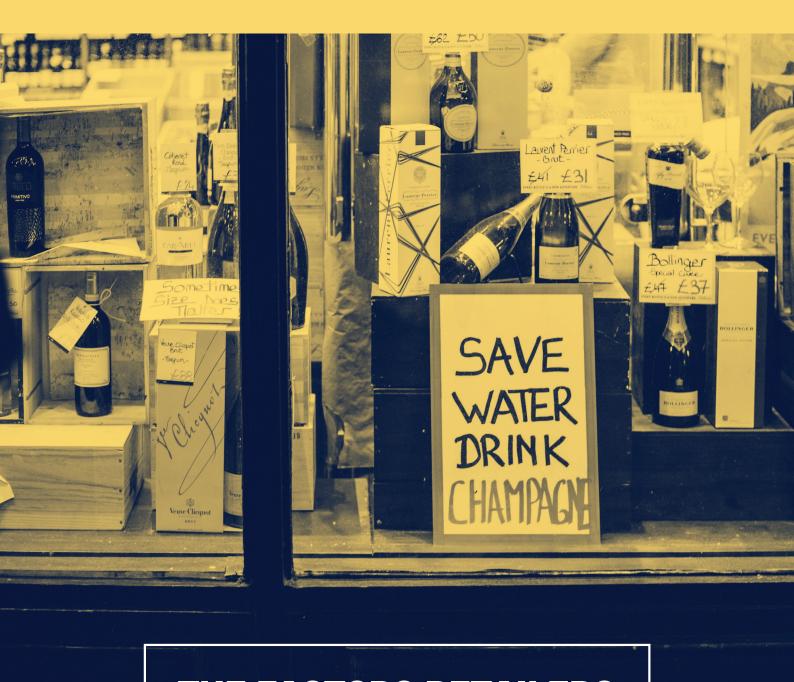
FIGURE 2: BOTTLED EXPORTS BY PRICE SEGMENT. 2017-18

PRICE SEGMENT	\$M	SHARE	CHANGE
\$2.49 and under	63	3%	-15%
\$2.50 to \$4.99	814	36%	4%
\$5.00 to \$7.49	344	15%	20%
\$7.50 to \$9.99	156	7%	13%
\$10.00 and over	855	38%	45%
TOTAL	2232	100%	19%

Source: Wine Australia

FIGURE 3: AVERAGE VALUE OF EXPORTS BY TOP 30 GI LABEL CLAIMS, 2017-18





THE FACTORS RETAILERS ASSESS WHEN DECIDING TO RANGE WINE



What do retailers look for when deciding which wines to stock? Price and taste, of course, but it goes a bit deeper than that.

WORDS ANN-MARIE AZZURRO AND PROFESSOR LARRY LOCKSHIN. EHRENBERG-BASS INSTITUTE FOR MARKETING SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

n the last several years, the Australian wine retail market has become even more competitive. The two major corporate retail chains have populated the market with a large number of private labelled wines, reducing the available shelf space for commercially branded wines. This has put more pressure on Australian wine producers wanting a retail presence.

We tried to understand the process retailers went through in deciding to range new wines, and especially wanted to understand the role of the brand and the region in that decision. This research involved in-depth interviews with 32 wine retailers in South Australia and New South Wales. Multiple positions (i.e. store managers, store owners and category managers) across a variety of stores (i.e. fine wine, independent and corporate retail chains) were asked questions about their ranging decisions.

The typical process for a winery involves organising a time with a prospective buyer, having the wine evaluated with a tasting (sometimes blind and sometimes not) often to find out there is no shelf space or the wine does not meet the requirements of the retailer. At the same time, wine producers have been

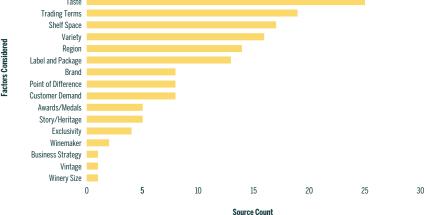
encouraged to promote their region. By doing so, it is believed that this would attract consumers to visit the region and consequently build the brand of local wineries. Yet, by investing all or some resources into promoting the region, some wine producers are neglecting to invest in their own brand.

Clearly being a well-known brand in a particular category has its advantages. Wellknown brands tend to be widely available and retailers understand that they need to stock these brands because most consumers (even those who do not regularly consume the category) seek to purchase these brands. But what about smaller brands? Should they focus on their region or more on building their own brand?

Previous research in other categories showed that the quality of the product is only one aspect of the stocking decision. The financial ability of a product (i.e. cost price, margin and retail price) is very important to a retailer. Retailers also consider stock management (i.e. delivery times, volume), the added value and support the producer is willing to provide (e.g. advertising and promotion), category growth and decline and the relationship between the wine retailer and supplier.



FIGURE 1: COUNT OF FACTORS CONSIDERED BY WINE RETAILERS IN THE STOCKING PROCESS



We discovered that wine retailers consider the price and the taste of the wine to be the two most important factors in the stocking process. There were also other factors considered (see Figure 1). Most wine retailers revealed that the recommended price acts as a benchmark for quality, creating an expectation, similar to wine consumers:

"Price is an important factor, it is probably the most important factor, because then that filters down to quality" (Store manager, Independent Retail Chain, SA); and

"I will go back to the old theme, taste it, like it, buy it. It is that simple! There is no rule or formula, it is about taste and price" (Store owner, Fine Wine Store, SA).

Wine retailers first decide if a wine is of a certain quality for its price and has reasonable sales potential, allowing it to move on to the next phase of assessment. The proposed trading terms are also

considered to be important to wine retailers. The volume available, the distribution method, payment, delivery and added value all influence a retailer's final decision. Many wine retailers expressed that the added value offered to help support them sell a wine is significant. Wine retailers want to identify the extra lengths a producer is willing to go to help promote their brand (i.e. wine tastings, promotions, advertising) to encourage consumers in store

During the stocking process, a brand's awareness level does impact the course of the decision. Even though branding is not considered to be as important as some other factors (e.g. variety, region and label) as seen in Figure 1, we found that wine retailers tend to favour better-known brands in their decision-making compared to lesser known brands. Better-known can be judged locally, not necessarily nationally. Figure 2 shows the

reasons linked to stocking well-known brands.

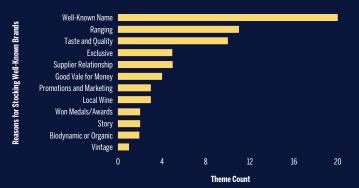
Yet, not all prospective wine brands are well known, particularly those which are starting out. Some wine brands tend to be more well known on a local scale, others at a national level, and some not at all. Therefore, when it comes to deciding to stock these lesser known brands, the taste and quality of the wine are the main reasons as to why a wine retailer decides to range the wine (see Figure 3).

For wine producers, these results provide intriguing answers into understanding how wine brands are assessed for ranging. Since wine retailers consider a number of factors, wine producers should focus on strengthening their sales pitch by promoting those factors that are strongly associated with their wine (e.g. taste, brand awareness and activities to build awareness). Prior to approaching a prospective retailer, wine producers should ensure their wine is priced according to its taste and quality, as these are the first (and most important) criteria wine retailers assess a potential new wine brand on.

Building a brand in such a competitive environment is vital for success, particularly in a retail setting. There is a large number of me-too followers producing the same variety from the same region. Therefore, to stand out, wine producers should focus their resources into building a distinct brand. Having a well-known brand, even locally, makes the acceptance of a brand a little bit easier, as it is difficult for a competitor to imitate. The objective for any wine producer should be to build a brand that is irreplaceable to wine retailers. Added to this should be a plan for promoting the wine, strong stocking and relationship management activities. Region plays a smaller role and is not seen to be as nearly important as the brand awareness and other factors noted above. •

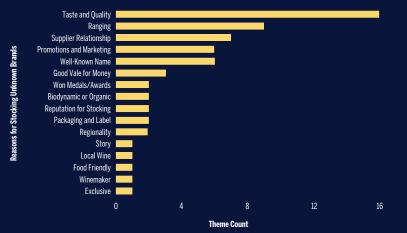
• Thanks to the Wolf Blass Foundation for funding Ann-Marie Azzurro's Master's scholarship. The results of this study are only a small part of an overall study as part of a Master's thesis. Further information and the full results regarding the stocking process can be found in the complete study – Azzurro, A., Lockshin, L., Sharp, B., Nguyen C. & Bogomolova, S. (2018), 'The Value of a Brand: A Wine Retailers Perspective'. Masters Thesis, Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science, University of South Australia. Write the authors to receive further details.

FIGURE 2: COUNT OF REASONS MENTIONED BY WINE RETAILERS WHEN STOCKING WELL-KNOWN BRANDS

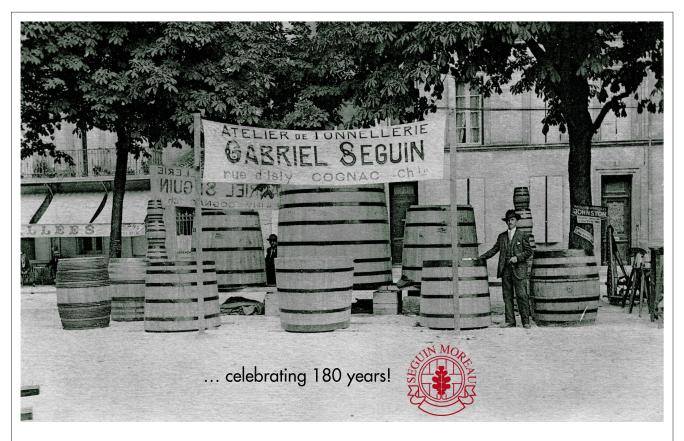


Note: Ranging refers to a compulsory ranging requirement (i.e. core list) where it is mandatory for all retail stores to stock a particular brand.

FIGURE 3: COUNT OF REASONS MENTIONED BY WINE RETAILERS WHEN STOCKING LESSER KNOWN BRANDS



Note: Ranging refers to a compulsory ranging requirement (i.e. core list) where it is mandatory for all retail stores to stock a particular brand.



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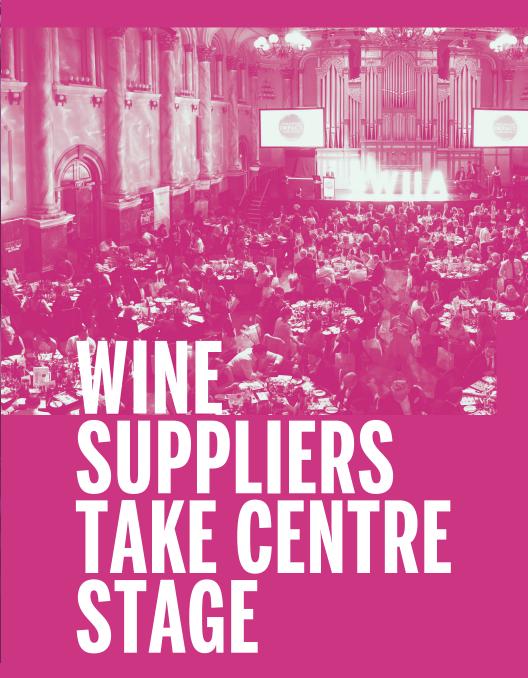
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The **NDtech** technology individually checks each wine stopper, allowing Amorim to deliver the world's first natural cork with a non-detectable TCA guarantee*. Winemakers rely on our dedication to supply the world's best stoppers. **NDtech** is the latest step to complement Amorim's proven preventive, curative and quality control methods, delivering the supreme guardian for wine.

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Australian wine suppliers are at the cutting edge of technology and innovation. It's time to stop and cheer them on.

ustralia is often referred to as having one of the most innovative wine sectors in the world. Much of the credit for that should go to our wine suppliers, who are renowned for being at the forefront of technology in winemaking, viticulture, marketing and tourism.

The best of our enterprising businesses will be recognised at the 2018 Wine Industry Impact Awards an initiative of Wine Industry

Suppliers Australia (WISA). The sold-out show will be held at the Adelaide Town Hall on Thursday 18 October.

"The awards showcase visionary organisations contributing to the capability and competitiveness of the Australian wine industry, which in the 12 months to the end of June this year achieved a 20 percent increase in wine exports valued at \$2.76 billion," WISA executive officer Matthew Moate says.

The awards are presented across categories

including grapegrowing, winemaking, engineering, packaging, distribution and logistics, marketing and communications and tourism. A start-up category also recognises emerging businesses that introduce new concepts, technologies, services and solutions in the industry.

Matthew said that expert, independent industry representatives had selected the finalists for the awards that recognise operators achieving excellence in domestic and export markets. "The judges were highly impressed by the quality of presentations from businesses that are having a significant and positive impact on our wine industry and wine tourism experiences," he said.

"The Australian wine industry employs about 172,000 people across 65 grapegrowing regions nationally and it contributes over \$40 billion a year to the Australian economy. As the sixth-largest wine producer in the world, and the fifth-largest wine exporter, the industry relies on innovative and progressive operators along the complete supply chain. These awards celebrate their achievements and each of the finalists is a worthy contender." •

WBM - Australia's Wine Business Magazine is the media partner and editor Anthony Madigan was on the judging panel for the Marketing & Communications Category.

 This Special Feature has been made possible with the support of: Amorim, BrandPrint, WISA, DW Fox Tucker, IMCD, MGA, WineWorks, Vicard, Best Bottlers, Studio 2 and VI Packaging.

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID...

GRAPEGROWING CATEGORY

PARTNERED BY BENTLEYS SA

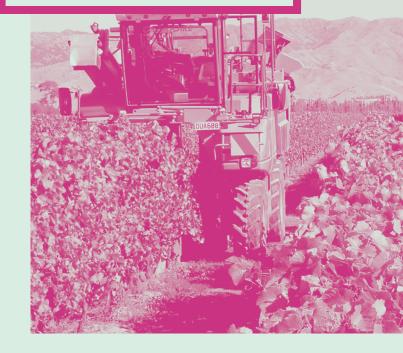
JUDGES TIM SIEBERT (BENTLEYS SA), MATTHEW POOLEY (POOLEY WINES), ANNA BAUM (WINE GRAPE COUNCIL OF SA)

CONSILIUM TECHNOLOGY

The collaborative approach taken by Consilium Technology in partnership with Wine Australia, DigitalGlobe and UniSA to create GAIA (Geospatial Artificial Intelligence for Agriculture) is potentially game changing. The ability to map all of Australia's vineyards to gain accurate data at various levels from individual grower to broader industry insights is impressive and reduces significant costs and potential errors in current manual approaches. The ability for industry level down to individual growers to access information to enable a wider and more desired use of precision viticulture techniques to improve yield and quality is impressive. This results in better capability of actionable data for growers and industry on continuous crop monitoring, disease prevention, detection and management and forecasting of yields at grower, regional, state and national level. The judges could easily understand the background and challenges this solution aims to address. This is a significant technological solution to add impact in both capability and competitiveness at all levels of industry. A truly impressive solution with demonstrated benefits to industry.

TRACMAP

This was a clear, evidenced based application with a focus on collaborative partnerships within the value chain. It delivered a highly customer centred approach to product and market development that delivers significant improvement to the management of vineyard tasks. Their hardware and leading software solutions ensure the right vehicle is in the right row doing the right job with the data capture to prove it. It strongly demonstrated competitiveness, giving examples of increased efficiency in the vineyard, reduced errors, and enabling informed and real-time decision making and cost savings for spraying and harvesting (split picking). The solution dramatically increased grower capability and knowledge including 'easy data capture', live job sharing and feedback/reporting from accurate variable spraying with linear rate capability. It demonstrated the ability for growers to adopt and apply the easy and accurate technology to eliminate errors, improving efficiencies, sustainability, accountability, quality and profitability in a way not previously possible. There was significant impact demonstrated through the rapid growth and uptake of the TracMap product throughout the Australian wine industry, with over 100 systems operating in vineyards and orchards across Australia. This was backed up as a 'game changer' with a number of highly valuable testimonials presented.



You can't handle the truth! Or can you?



Remember all the wasted hours in sales meetings listening to people say, 'I reckon!' Everyone has their own opinion, but where does the actual truth lie? Built specifically for the liquor industry, Brandprint offers an intuitive, intelligent and pragmatic approach to



cloud-based data analytics designed for better decision making. Join the A-list of industry early-adopters already tapping into deeper levels of insight & understanding. Brandprint drives fact-based sales & marketing actions and delivers top line management reporting. The whole truth in one place. Fairdinkum.

WINEMAKING CATEGORY

PARTNERED BY DW FOX TUCKER LAWYERS

JUDGES SANDY DONALDSON (DW FOX TUCKER LAWYERS), SHANE HARRIS (WINES BY GEOFF HARDY), MELANIE CHESTER (SUTTON GRANGE WINERY)

IMCD LTD & VASON

The judges commended the Proteo Test as an innovative technology to promote efficient testing of protein stability in wines, specifically white and rosé. The fact that it offers savings to the industry in processing time and a decrease in over fining is exciting. It is a great alternative proposition for a commonly used and often unbearably time-consuming task. The industry needs to shift the mindset of "that's the way we've always done it" and to investigate new technologies and testing methods such as these. Over fining is a huge issue for both cost and overall wine quality and this method can address that. This innovation ultimately assists to produce better quality product. The testing to date shows the technology to be as reliable as the industry standard methods. Building the confidence of winemakers to further trust this method will be important so that it is more readily used as the key measure rather than a secondary or confirmation test. With the ever-growing demand on winemakers to reduce costs while maintaining wine quality, this is a product that is a worthy finalist for this category.

TONNELLERIE VICARD

Industry has needed to rethink how we approach oak variability and Vicard is leading the charge. Measuring tannin potential rather than relying on forest selection and grain size and seasoning alone seems very logical. Adding a higher level of precision and replicability through a radiant heat moving turntable and closed system also seem logical advances. The main advantage in the industry impact is that Vicard has remained open to the process being not only further refined but offering to customise barrels to the customers' requirements and this will be the key to the success of this range in Australia. The ability for winemakers to control and oversee the outcome of the barrel specific to their wine style, vineyard and winemaking adds significant capability. This demonstrates an important move for barrel coopers - away from the fancy names and marketing terms, and more towards repeatability and assurance of quality through testable and measurable quides. This is a significant step in accountability for one of the last remaining uncontrolled variabilities of winemaking and is a worthy finalist in this category.



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FINALISTS!

Grapegrowing | Winemaking | Engineering | Packaging | Distribution & Logistics Marketing & Communication | Tourism | Start Up

Award Partners

















ENGINEERING CATEGORY

PARTNERED BY PERNOD RICARD WINEMAKERS
JUDGES STEVEN SCOTT (PERNOD RICARD WINEMAKERS),
SIMON NORDESTGAARD (AUSTRALIAN WINE RESEARCH INSTITUTE),
LUKE WILSON (YALUMBA FAMILY VIGNERONS)

BEST BOTTLERS

Best Bottlers has worked with an Australian supplier to install a small format packaging solution that increases speed, reduces costs and provides greater flexibility in packaging options for their customers. The judges commended the collaborative nature of the relationship with Recopak to come up with this alternative solution. The reduction of cost to the customer is applauded. However, more importantly the installation of the new semiautomated equipment has also led to consistency, reduction in variability and greater flexibility to do more packs. The application clearly detailed specifics on the amount of time and cost advantages for machine made to order versus hand or rework options giving a tangible demonstrated level of impact. This unique offering as a packaging solution to a wide range of wine producing customers is advantageous. The thought process and ability to retrofit into existing line with internal bypass was a great feature. This was a commendable submission that is a worthy finalist.

SEELEY INTERNATIONAL

The Climate Wizard indirect evaporative cooling technique offered by Seeley is a clever way of achieving lower temperature or humidity than possible with traditional evaporative cooling and at lower costs than possible with refrigerated cooling. It directly impacts wine quality, reduction in evaporation from the barrels and potential other microclimate issues. This is a fantastic solution for energy reduction while managing barrel hall thermal mass. It keeps the temperatures very stable and humidity conditions in the most efficient way. While not a new solution and having won a number of awards already the addition of some intelligence and smart controls provides further opportunity and impact for significant payback benefits on energy usage. The presented case study with Barossa Valley Estate was commendable and it ticks the right boxes for power savings and improved wine quality through maintaining constant temperatures. The added environmental benefits with less energy, water and refrigerant delivers further competitiveness. The integration of smart technologies adds impact to an existing proven solution.

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PACKAGING CATEGORY

PARTNERED BY AUSTRALIAN VINTAGE LTD
JUDGES JOHN KONTREC (AUSTRALIAN VINTAGE LTD),
RACHEL ATKINS (FOX GORDON WINES), RICHARD
MCCAUGHEY (DOMAINE CHANDON AUSTRALIA)

AMORIM AUSTRALASIA

This entry has shown how a product can totally reinvent itself on a number of levels. The fact that the very issue of TCA being detrimental to preservation of wine has been researched and addressed on a level well beyond any before, is outstanding. With Amorim having researched this to a degree that they understand it well enough to provide a guarantee, is the next level in commitment. The judges applauded the business in its risk taking and overhauling of a product range and resulting growth of its business. This should be a test case for all businesses to see as they have not only saved their business from possible extinction, but made themselves market leaders that all wine business will benefit from. The judges noted significant industry impact in the areas of export, winemaker confidence in the NDtech product and the resulting flow-on effect through to customer and consumer confidence in wine purchasing decisions, positive experiences, demand and loyalty. The demonstrated additional commitment to education at all levels is also commended. This significant investment in bringing to market a closure that gives confidence to the winemaking community, allowing Australian wineries to truly take advantage of opportunities in the Chinese and US markets, truly ticks all of the boxes.

VI PACKAGING

VI Packaging has shown clearly it is a business that can provide a multitude of options for packaging solutions for the industry. Their armoury of everything from components, processes and knowledge is a total solution for any prospective client. Providing services equally for small and large producers is an outcome worth recognising for our industry and one that the judges saw as having a significant impact. With a solid foundation as a business it has built its own profile and its growth reflects the value it delivers to industry. The judges drew confidence from a range of sound testimonials from their clients that added impact to the application. Their valuable capability and competitiveness to act as a one stop shop for design and sourcing of dry goods that allows smaller and larger enterprises to easily call upon available industry knowledge, is certainly impactful. Their growing footprint outside of their traditional Barossa base shows a level of commitment to industry. The judges recognised the VI Packaging business as a highly capable, competitive and impactful contender offering consolidated packaging solutions. Their high-quality customer relationships, collaborative approach, competitive pricing, convenience and reliability deliver a significant level of impact. Their capability through strong in-house resources, skills and knowledge coupled with their convenient e-commerce platform adds to their industry impact. A company most wineries would enjoy working with.



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DISTRIBUTION & LOGISTICS CATEGORY

PARTNERED BY MGA INSURANCE BROKERS

JUDGES PHIL KEENIHAN (MGA INSURANCE BROKERS), BILLIE STAPLETON
(MONTARA WINES), DARRYN JONES (PENNY'S HILL WINES)

eBEV

An amazing, innovative concept and the way of the future. Impressive growth and demonstrated impact for a somewhat mature start-up. It's another example of technology simplifying the way we go about our daily business. The major winner with eBev is definitely the on-premise sector of the wine industry, being able to save themselves a number of hours every week with their procurement, while having the ability to better inform staff and ultimately customers with enhanced product knowledge. The judges were impressed with their business model, capabilities and impact on the wine industry and the growing virality and potential for this solution into the future. With so many brands in the portfolio it would be easy to get lost for the smaller producers. However, this is an extremely cost-effective way of playing on a world stage and a great asset to busy establishments as a one-stopshop. The wine industry has exploited science in the vineyard and the winemaking process and the age of tech is something that should be elevated as the next opportunity to deliver exceptional capability, competitiveness and impact. The eBev solution is one that is clearly stepping up to the mark and is delivering. The judges applauded this very professional presentation that demonstrated and hit the mark in regard to the criteria of capability, competitiveness and impact.

WINEWORKS AUSTRALIA

Solely targeting the wine industry, WineWorks can't help but deliver on what it promises. There's just no back-up plan. WineWorks delivers their solutions through company culture. It's clear to see that their employees are empowered to swiftly deal with any issues that may arise from transporting wine around the country and are well adapted to creating transport, warehousing, reworking and export solutions for their clients. It is more about understanding the unique challenges faced by clients and embracing that they all have their very different nuances. The judges recognised an ongoing commitment year in, year out to continue to invest in infrastructure and services to improve their competitiveness and capability that directly flows to their customers. The growth and improvements are meticulous and sustainable and develop as their customers allow. A truly symbiotic relationship that allows all wine producers to benefit. An impressive and hardworking team that leaves nothing to chance. The demands of this industry and the turnaround times are unforgiving. WineWorks are worthy finalists in this highly competitive category for understanding and creating solutions in the supply chain from grape to glass. Reliability, with cost effective wins is the key. Complete faith in the supply chain is the ultimate.

Australia's best wine suppliers have one thing in common: they all advertise in WBM.

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Great wine starts in the vineyard community

Being part of the community means bumping into four people you know at the bakery; reading the poster for the lost sausage dog on the noticeboard at the supermarket; volunteering to sell Snakes Alive and cupcakes at the netball canteen; and dressing up as one of the three little pigs in the pageant.

At WineWorks we feel honoured to be a part of the wine community. For us it means being accountable; caring and sharing; trusting one another and working together to get the job done. It also means taking pride in our performance and not letting you down (because we know we'll bump into you outside the post office).

It's this sense of community that drives us to deliver your wine to Peterborough or Peru – on time and safely.

Being part of the wine community also means giving a bit back, like sponsoring the local women's footy team.

Go you McLaren Vale Engles!







ELEVATING TRADITION

SINCE 1925



MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS CATEGORY

PARTNERED BY WBM – AUSTRALIA'S WINE BUSINESS MAGAZINE
JUDGES ANTHONY MADIGAN (WBM – AUSTRALIA'S WINE BUSINESS
MAGAZINE), LOUISE LAWSON (HEARTLAND WINES), ARMANDO MARIA
CORSI (EHRENBERG-BASS INSTITUTE OF MARKETING SCIENCE)

CONFIDENCE IN TASTE

Quality, detailed presentation. Though in its infancy, this dynamic offering of sending direct tasting samples to consumers could change the game in China and in other export markets. You can do all the marketing and communication you like, but getting wine in mouths is arguably the ultimate form of marketing in our sector. Love the idea of consumers tasting the wine while watching a video of the winemaker explaining it to them; the younger generation responds to video communication. The judges were also impressed by the ability of winemakers to receive direct feedback from consumers, allowing them to hone styles that resonate with the market rather than taking pot luck. The market keeps hearing how important education is to the success of Australian wine in China, and this product fits the bill. Great packaging, too. A bold idea that is yet to be fully proven, but huge potential in our most important market. The ability to taste wine consistently ranks as one of the key reasons why consumers make purchases. This is even more true when a consumer is less experienced with wine, as it often happens with Chinese consumers. The solution provided by Confidence in Taste combines a very effective marketing tool (i.e. tastings) with the convenience of doing so from the comfort of your own home, thus providing the consumers a relaxed environment for the potential purchase to be made. Confidence in Taste combines a high level of technical knowledge necessary to make sure that the wines arrive intact at destination with a very powerful marketing tool, which is the actual tasting. This solution could be potentially expanded in every export market, thus improving the sustainability of the Australian wine industry and even to other premium food and wine verticals. This was a great submission that was well written and easy to assess. Confidence in Taste has clearly identified the pain points for producers. The presentation clearly provides evidence of the performance improvement over the first year. It offers a very compelling offering for producers as a potential game changer and one to watch.

BRANDPRINT & AUSTRALIAN VINTAGE LTD

Outstanding presentation; detailed and well thought out focusing on the impact this business intelligence tool provides. The judges applauded the strong focus on sales. The Australian wine industry needs to brush up on sales in this competitive environment. It's one thing to make quality wine, another thing entirely to sell it. The software also has a strong focus on efficiency and profitability – music to any business owner's ears. It's refreshing to see wine businesses analysing sales data to the same extent winemakers analyse wine data. Making a big impact judging by the quality of clients and the AVL testimonials. The Brand Print tool is impressive. In a marketing world where too often the word marketing is associated with too much coolness, buzz words, love, passion, etc. it is refreshing to see a company that helps wineries and other alcoholic beverage producers to pause for a moment (or two) and assess what ultimately matters to keep a company sustainably and successfully in business: sales. The implementation of this software using a well-known package such as Office would make it easy for business analysts to use it, and, most importantly, it will help companies understand that as much as they should dedicate resources to improve the intrinsic qualities of the wines, there is another critical side of business they should pay attention to. The number and variety of companies that are already adopting the software speaks for itself about its success. The application clearly demonstrated to the judges the before and after impact that this software delivers on companies' performances. This tool can have broad industry impact for producers, distributors, wholesalers and retailers as a here-and-now solution – cloud based, subscription model on a MS platform. Spot on, especially when considering the number of small players in the Australian wine industry.





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Is your brand cool and modern or simple and elegant? Your buildings should match.

Design your buildings to tell your story.

LEAD THEM IN

Happy tourists feel confident when they know where to go and that you are open.

Create an entry that invites and leads them in.

FIND YOUR ANGLE

Your angle is what makes you unique within your target market.

Work your angle to create a unique atmosphere.

Download the 7 DESIGN TOOLS to make your building THE unmissable tourism place.

CELLAR DOOR AND TASTING ROOMS | ACCOMMODATION | VISITOR / WELCOME CENTRES



TOURISM

PARTNERED BY CATHAY PACIFIC

JUDGES ROX MEERTENS (CATHAY PACIFIC), HAYDEN ZAMMIT
(TOURISM PROFESSIONAL), NICOLE HODGSON (SEPPELTSFIELD WINES)

STUDIO S2 ARCHITECTS

Amy and Daniel Smedley are the co-directors of Studio S2 Architects, who specialise in providing architectural and interior design to the tourism industry, with a focus on wine tourism. Through personalised consultation with their clients, they design a physical wine presence for wine businesses to attract visitors, increase sales and create a unique wine experience for customers. They review the business in its current form to see where overall improvements can be made to the business – this ranges from the overall appeal of the premises and surrounds through to complete attention to detail in all areas, along with recommendations, which enables wineries and cellar door owners the potential to grow the business and take it to a new level. The judges highly commend Amy and Daniel and Studio S2 Architects for their innovation, attention to detail and their focus on wine tourism. Studio S2 Architects have demonstrated an innovative approach to engaging the wine tourism industry by developing a number of complimentary resources to support growth and engagement within the industry. Amy and Daniel have provided key insights and best practice for various elements including visitor experience, cellar door experiences and business growth. The resources online provide an excellent lead magnet for the business, but most importantly provides capability for tourism businesses to develop new skills and business practices. As demonstrated through the submission, S2 Architects have provided support for a number of cellar door developments notably the feasibility, strategic direction and project management and has increased the capacity and visitation on site. This not only benefits this business but the region as a whole.

SARAH CONSTRUCTIONS & D'ARENBERG WINES

A project which spanned 14 years, from the time when Chester Osborn presented his initial concept to Sarah Constructions and over the ensuing years, take the project from Chester's imagination to reality. This project is unarguably unique and Sarah Constructions have overcome extreme challenges and difficulties to build 'The Cube'. The judges commend them for their commitment and excellence to this project with a clearly demonstrated partnership approach. Since its opening in December 2017, The Cube has experienced significant increases in visitation, domestic online bookings and international bookings, while providing economic activity in the McLaren Vale region. A truly inspiring and unique experience for visitors to The Cube and one that really puts a stamp on McLaren Vale and South Australia. Through demonstrating a clear partnership with d'Arenberg, a great deal of trust and respect has been established to see this concept be modelled on best practice and going above and beyond to change 'the norm'. The development of the d'Arenberg Cube has made a tremendous contribution to not only the winery but the broader South Australian visitor economy, notably the McLaren Vale wine region. This project has activated the region as a key icon for South Australia, directly employing 32 FTE ongoing and more than 150 jobs during the construction phase. Although having only been open for a short period of time, d'Arenberg Cube has been featured in many global tourism campaigns and is promptly being recognised as an icon. Without strong partners that can enable wineries to take risks and innovate their 'place', projects such as these can never be realised. Sarah Constructions' partnership from the very start to finish has allowed d'Arenberg to significantly improve its capability and competitiveness and to impact its broader region and the brand of Wine Australia internationally.

A quality industry deserves a quality magazine.

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START-UP CATEGORY

PARTNERED BY CASELLA FAMILY BRANDS

JUDGES DANIEL CASELLA (CASELLA FAMILY BRANDS), STEVE AUCH-SCHWELK (SILICON BALLS), CARLA DIAS-WADEWITZ (FLINDERS NEW VENTURE INSTITUTE)

eBEV

The eBev application demonstrated a tool that will largely benefit the on-premise trade in providing a B2B platform to transact between buyers and sellers of wine. It aims to make it easier for buyers to find products they want in a single location while reducing costs for sellers in servicing the market and reducing the face-to-face time to collect orders. The judges agreed that brand owners will still require significant investment in the human capital to create connections, share stories and education about their product. However, there is an opportunity to somewhat change behaviours of both sides of the transaction through this marketplace to add value and reduce some costs, especially when a buyer knows what they want. There is clear opportunity to look at ways to further monetise and draw additional revenue streams through the platform that could impact profitability for eBev and increase the value proposition for users. Both sides of the marketplace will need to see added value to accept these costs. From a start-up perspective it would have been valuable to understand the underlying financial structure and or market potential. However, it was clear to see that in a short time it has had impressive market penetration that suggests a growing industry acceptance. eBev is a worthy finalist that has taken a problem and sought to use technology to solve it. It is a complementing tool to support transactions by creating a marketplace for sellers and buyers to interact.

RAPID PHENOTYPING

The opportunity for Rapid Phenotyping as a hand-held device attached to a phone to provide analysis from the vineyard to the bottle and even through the distribution chain, is impressive. A very early stage product that is due to be released in Q4 2018 with significant impact potential across the grape and wine value chain. The judges agreed that it is a very smart move to productise and once it has proven its accuracy there is a world of opportunity both in wine and beyond. This potential industry changer is definitely one to watch. The main challenge is getting the technology right and giving the confidence to the market by proving the accuracy of the technology matched with investment and value returns. This is a worthy finalist from an innovation perspective in this highly competitive and broad-ranging category.



VI Packaging is Australia's leading supplier of wine and craft beer packaging.

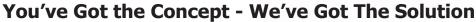
We are honoured to be finalists in the packaging category for the

2018 Wine Industry IMPACT Awards

We pride ourselves on having strong relationships with our customers and supply partners.

We are passionate about offering customers large and small a one-stop solution for packaging by providing:

- quality products with short lead times
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- ease of ordering day or night
- innovative packaging
- generic or printed drygoods
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CALLED TRIBE



eople don't believe what you tell them. They rarely believe what you show them. They often believe what their friends tell them. They always believe what they tell themselves." - Seth Godin, Tribes.

In an age where the platforms to launch a brand are now cheaper and more accessible than ever before, the belief that you can create a market is in fact a belief in the idea of curating a committed and loyal audience.

But why is this so important for the wine community?

The rise and rise of the multiple retail platform has been the triumph of the few over the many - big business who trade in volume, scale and mainstream value can thrive where smaller brands struggle to make margin, deliver the required hurdle rate (case depletions per week) and command shelf space. The longpromised vision of a marketplace connected directly to the consumer is now the priority play for the majority of Australia's 2,500 wine

of their sales mix from a 30 percent margin via traditional routes (national and interstate wholesaler to retailer), to a potential 70 percent margin via cellar door and mail-order.

Online access and permission-marketing mean that it is now possible to find and build your tribe - a unique group of friends, fans or followers who share your world view. This can be done through a website, a blog, a radio program or a speaking platform. But really, the medium is irrelevant; what matters most is the trust you establish with people.

If you asked Seth Godin (the Godfather of tribe-building) how to build an audience, he would say you need a message that is personal, relevant and anticipated. Here are some fundamental rules for creating a culture of engagement and building an enduring, committed tribe:

- Set the stage. Be vocal to your community about the importance of your message and that you need their help sharing it. Make it centred on the shared purpose, and make sure it is bigger than just about you and your brand - e.g. 'only great wine for every occasion'.
- · Regularly brief your tribe. What's coming next? What milestones have you reached? If you have any shared goals, are you reaching them? Have you brought someone new onto the team? Being transparent about what is happening 'behind the scenes' with your business or project helps people feel involved.
- Share the spotlight. Highlight ambassadors and create a narrative around those who invest in the community. Have certain people been with your community or joined your program at the very beginning? How can you make them feel special (e.g. by giving them status) and share that story with the public?
- · Encourage engagement. Reward those that are highly active and engaged. Give shoutouts in blog posts, on Twitter, or in weekly videos to the most frequent commenters on your blog or the most active members

- of your community. The more you make people feel like their efforts are recognised, the more it encourages others to contribute as well.
- Teach via example. Set up expectations of engagement from the beginning, and continually reinforce them. On your 'About' page, can you highlight and share stories about people in your community that are highly engaged and dedicated? How about in your welcome email when someone signs up to your newsletter? In as many places as possible, try to both set up the expectation for engagement and continually reinforce that in blog posts, tweets and other places.
- Get them invested. Make people feel a part of the key decisions that are made in your community. Make them feel involved in the origin story and the ongoing unfolding of your story.

While the prescription is easy, it is not for the faint-hearted. Apart from anything else, if the reality of preferred sales channel for the majority of smaller producers is moving to owned platforms, the proliferation of consumer-facing options will become as dizzying as the supermarket shelves. In short, prepare for the fact that your bright future is going to be just as crowded, busy and competitive as your present.

The truth is that early adopters will not coalesce into active and committed tribes around the status quo. The vibrant tribes in our communities are the ones closer the edges, or those trying to make change. Above all, have courage in compelling design, gradually build your customer experience, and tirelessly work on customer retention (combatting 'churn' is more important than driving growth).

If you are trying to build a tribe, a community or a movement, and you want it to be safe and beyond reproach at the same time, you will fail. Heretical thoughts, combined with keeping your promise, and delivered in a way that captures the attention of the minority, is the path that works. •

Spain, wine and line the living is fine

n June I attended the Institute of
Masters of Wine Living Wine
Symposium in Logroño, in the heart of
La Rioja. There I joined 115 other MWs –
28 of us winemakers – 73 students and
261 various folk from the wine trade, all
drawn from 40 countries.

The three and a half days were packed with presentations, tastings and, in true Spanish style, late-finishing dinners, followed by early breakfast sessions. Locations varied from the excellent *Riojaforum* function centre to dinners in various wineries and on the dirt of the Logroño bullring. No blood or brown in sight!

In the session *The secret life of microbes*, Mike Brajkovich MW described his study, with the University of Auckland, of yeast succession in uninoculated ferments. Naturally occurring species of *Kloeckera*, *Pichia* and *Torulaspora*, often circulated in the vineyard by bees and fruit flies, could bring complexity in the early stages of





fermentation before S. cerevisiae takes over.

At the other end of the industry Michael Walton, a lecturer at the University of Technology, Sydney, spoke on *Curating an adaptive wine business*. He's worked with Accolade, Treasury, Diageo, Macquarie Bank and Nestlé. I've never had so many laughs at a business presentation but, seriously, find an opportunity to hear him, or at least look at http://www.michaelwaltonconsulting.com.

Maureen Downey of WineFraud described the variety and extent of counterfeit wine in circulation, believed to be US\$3 billion. The greatest barrier to prosecutions has been the reluctance of police to get involved in what it sees as 'a rich man's problem'.

In the Future-wise session, Jonathan Porritt gave a wide-reaching address on the 'extremely grim' extent of the warming climate, but expressed optimism about the wine industry's opportunities to adapt. Jose Vouillamoz followed, describing inter alia how old, established varieties had a role through their genetic diversity. He noted Garnacha, with 500 clones; Pinot, 800; Nebbiolo, 98; Sangiovese, 113; and Xinomavro, 20 as examples. As 'rising stars' he included Graciano in Spain, Alfrocheiro in Portugal and Teroldego in northern Italy, among others.

Marco Simonit, introduced as 'the man who made pruning sexy', gave what many thought a scary presentation. His specialty is maintaining live, productive wood in spurpruned cordons. He showed longitudinal cuts along cordons to show how brown, dead wood starves unproductive spurs. Through his company Simonit&Sirch he has trained over 4,000 pruners worldwide to take the message further. Check out his website http://simonitesirch.com/ and the

Masters of Wine met in Spain to ponder the secret life of microbes, curating an adaptive wine business and more. Nick Bulleid MW was among them.

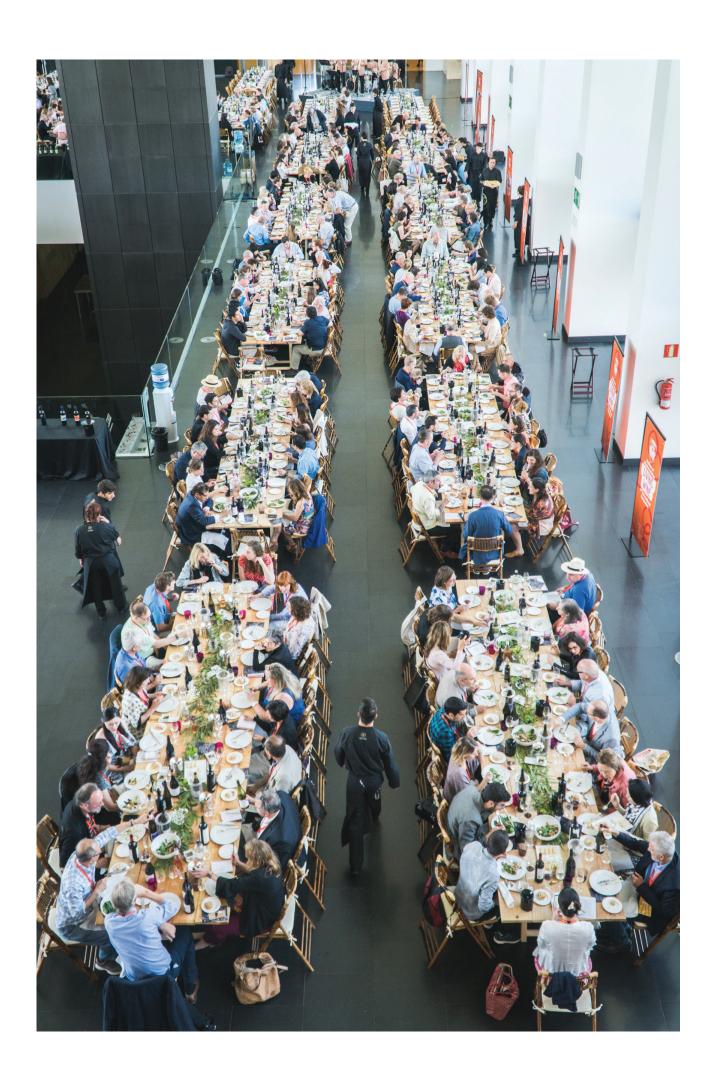
WORDS NICK BULLEID MW
PHOTOS INSTITUTE OF MASTERS OF WINE

impressive companies he has advised.

A session on new terroirs comprised an illustrated tasting of seven wines from four countries followed by a presentation. Ian Kellett, the founder of Hambledon Vineyard in Hampshire, UK, illustrated his lengthy research to find the best soils, aspect and exposure to the coast. Premiere Cuvée, a Chardonnay, Noir, Meunier blend, showed ripe, sweet fruit with that typically penetrating English acidity, while the Rosé showed more weight, an attractive touch of strawberry and lovely balance.

Kusunoki Winery in Nagano, Japan, has to battle frost in winter and both high vigour and humid weather in summer. Special Cuvée Chardonnay 2014 had complex stonefruit and cashew flavours, but was curiously low in acidity. Altos Las Hormigas Malbec 2014, from 1,300m altitude at Gualtallary, Argentina, also lacked a little in acidity, but had attractive black pepper and red fruits. Finca Ambrosia Viña Unica Cabernet Sauvignon 2014 had a beautifully fine palate with red berry flavours and a good acid line.

I thought the star of that tasting was Moët Hennessy Ao Yun 2014 from Shangri-La, China. I wrote about my visit to this region's vineyards in the foothills of the Himalayas a couple of issues ago, but had not yet tasted this wine. I thought its intense blackcurrant fruit, elegant structure and fine tannins were impressive and a great debut. Finding out for yourself will set







you back €300 a bottle, quite a statement!

Jean-Baptiste Ancelot is best described as an adventurer and the founder of Wine Explorers. His presentation was a remarkable summary of his vineyard 'discoveries' in 90 countries. Space doesn't permit me to describe all, but you'll find web searches on the following fascinating: Leleshwa Estate,

delicious, with gamey and tobacco flavours, great balance and well integrated oak, the '78 still showing hints of raspberry.

The old and the new were also on hand in the final tasting *Inspirational Spain*. The highly regarded Cava producer Gramona is a fifth generation company with biodynamically managed vineyards. Enoteca

"The greatest barrier to prosecutions has been the reluctance of police to get involved in what it sees as 'a rich man's problem'."

Kenya; Awash Wine in Ethiopia; Hällåkra Vineyard, Sweden; Marqués de Puntalarga near the equator at 2,800m altitude in Colombia; and Granmonte, which grows two harvests a year of Durif, Verdelho and Chenin blanc – an exotic mix! – in Thailand.

The New Spain was an amazingly diverse walk-around tasting of 57 wines, from the near conventional to the innovative and the really freaky, in particular showcasing unusual – to Australia – or rare local varieties. I thought Listán prieto, Caiño, Prieto picudo, Bobal and Mandón were all memorable. Elsewhere in our travels Godello, Verdejo, Loureiro, Treixadura and Mencía continued to impress.

For one dinner, delegates were distributed around different wineries and we were lucky to score Bodegas Franco Españolas. This is a good example of an old Rioja house – founded in 1890 – which has modernised its equipment and wines without losing its traditional character. It makes about half a million cases a year. The 1994 and, particularly, 1978 Bordón Gran Reservas were

Gramona 2002 is its current 16-year release and shows a complex mixture of citrus, honey and aldehyde. Viña Tondonia has long been one of my favourite Riojas, but I had never had a rosé, let alone a 2008 Gran Reserva. Made from bush-pruned Garnacha, Tempranillo and a little Viura, this had a light orange/tawny colour, beautiful, savoury flavours and a distinct but balanced texture.

Pingus 2015 showed its typically rich, concentrated red and dark plummy fruit and mouth-coating tannin. It needs time, but will be excellent. Already excellent was its Ribera del Duero neighbour Vega Sicilia Unico 1996. In spite of the garnet/tawny hue to its deep colour, it still showed sweet fruit flavours and built a rich, perfumed nose as it sat in the glass. The complexity and fine tannin balance were superb. The wine spent six years in wood, between barriques and vats, and the current winemaker, Gonzalo Iturriaga, has admitted to being afraid of the aging regime when he began.

Raúl Pérez looks like a cross between

Hagrid, Costa and Nick Ryan. He's softly spoken but daring with his winemaking. His winery in Bierzo was built in 1818, but he consults elsewhere in Spain, too. His Ultreia 2014 is largely Mencía with Bastardo and Garnacha tintorera (Alicante Bouschet), fermented with 100 percent stems and aged under flor for six to eight months. It had intense, fresh blue fruits, black pepper and just a hint of aldehyde, finishing with very dry yet fine tannins. Unusual, delicious!

La Faraona 2015 from Descendientes de J. Palacios is also largely from Mencía, but was more conventional. Nevertheless, Isabel Palacios described how the company finds that light flor can give some of their red wines good stability. The half-acre La Faraona vineyard had survived the EU's vine-pull scheme in 1990, when many old vineyards were lost. This has a perfumed nose of red and blue fruits, a fabulously fine palate with talc-like tannins and great length – a sensationally good wine.

Finally came Bodegas Toro Albala Don PX 1931, which clocks in with an RS of 410g/l. Against *Maturation* in delegates' notes the company confides 996 months. The colour is impenetrable chocolate, with an olive green edge. The wine is hugely complex and intense, with coffee, chocolate and spices, and a soft brush of talc-tannin but no 'wood acidity'.

The final lunch, accompanied by 24
Australian wines chosen by us winemaking
MWs, was preceded by the closing ceremony,
when the Institute's Chair Jane Masters MW
and Brian Croser announced that the next
symposium would be in Adelaide in 2022. In
the diary! •

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HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Wine exports are heading in the right direction, grape prices have recovered and vineyard valuations have increased. What's not to love?

WORDS TOBY LANGLEY, LANGLEY & CO

igns of improving trading conditions in the Australian wine business started to appear five years ago, but it is only in the past 12 months that it has been universally acknowledged. What is interesting is the pace and timing of improvements in different segments of the market.

The premier regions were essentially the first to move and grapegrowers have been the first to feel the effects of the improvement with steady increases in grape prices and crop values across most regions for the preferred varieties, particularly reds.

The commercial regions have seen a big kick-along in 2017 and 2018, driven by a global market shortage of commercial wine and the realisation that Australia has finally cleared its wine surplus.

Premium regions have seen a moderation in prices more recently after the short vintages of 2014-2016 were rebalanced with a bountiful 2017 harvest.

If you are not making money today as a grapegrower, it's time to review. There is either something wrong with your vineyard or how it's being managed.

The return of profitability for grapegrowers has seen a marked increase in the sale of vineyards and the prices being achieved.

There are several regions in Australia where decent vineyards are comfortably commanding \$100,000 per hectare. These include the Yarra Valley, Tasmania, Barossa Valley, Margaret River and McLaren Vale. Valuations at this level were the stuff of dreams five years ago.

Vineyards in the Riverland in SA have seen a more meteoric rise (in percentage terms) supported by a tightening of supply and the expectation that commercial grapes prices will rise further in the years ahead. These vineyards were a hard sell at \$25,000 per hectare with reasonable permanent water allocations five years ago. The water is now worth \$25,000 and the vineyard \$40,000 per hectare equivalent, and there is very little of scale being offered for sale. Who saw that coming?

The recovery in profitability of wine companies has been less fortunate. Treasury Wine Estates has gone from beer company trash to stockmarket darling in five years. For many years the collective industry crossed its fingers that TWE would one day achieve its potential. That day has finally come.

Casella Family Brands continues to perform well and has built an amazing portfolio of brands and vineyards during the downturn, meaning they now have a range of premium brands and security of fruit supply to consolidate their position near the top of the industry.

Accolade Wines has also benefitted from opportunities to expand its portfolio with a string of acquisitions including St Hallett, Petaluma and Grant Burge to broaden its offering to consumers and allow its private equity owners a profitable exit. Medium sized family producers Seppeltsfield, Brown Brothers and Kingston Estate have also been active with acquisitions, and along with Taylors and Yalumba are well placed with

scale and responsiveness to benefit from the upswing in the industry's fortunes.

The future of smaller producers may be less certain. Changes to the WET rebate will be a \$150,000 pay cut for many, and success in China can be elusive and frustrating, not to mention navigating distributor relationships and selling a handmade product in supermarkets.

Furthermore, growing a premium red wine business requires significant capital to fund inventory and other working capital demands. These challenges are alive and well in the wine business 24/7, regardless of where we are in the cycle.

Fortunately the improvements in the industry has delivered an appreciable rise in the valuations of smaller winemakers, and an uptick in activity, as some choose to sell and others get larger to take to fight the medium and large producers.

The next stage of the cycle will no doubt be as fascinating as the last – and hopefully we can all enjoy the ride. •

MARKET WRAP	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
SA RIVERLAND SHIRAZ (\$/TONNE)	\$341	\$315	\$336	\$396	\$487
SA RIVERLAND SHIRAZ CRUSH (TONNES)	112,834	112,770	111,842	116,501	110,286
CROP VALUE	\$38,476,394	\$35,522,550	\$37,578,912	\$46,134,396	\$53,709,282
BAROSSA VALLEY SHIRAZ (\$/TONNE)	\$1,849	\$2,137	\$2,212	\$2,284	\$2,252
BAROSSA VALLEY SHIRAZ CRUSH (TONNES)	23,934	26,328	32,533	48,844	36,658
CROP VALUE	\$44,253,966	\$56,262,936	\$71,962,996	\$111,559,696	\$82,553,816
CLARE VALLEY SHIRAZ (\$/TONNE)	\$1,310	\$1,266	\$1,424	\$1,417	\$1,441
CLARE SHIRAZ CRUSH (TONNES)	5,896	5,039	6,091	9,724	7,642
CROP VALUE	\$7,723,760	\$6,379,374	\$8,673,584	\$13,778,908	\$11,012,122
AUSTRALIAN WINE EXPORTS					
TOTAL VALUE	\$1,780,000,000	\$1,890,000,000	\$2,170,000,000	\$2,310,000,000	\$2,750,000,000
\$/LITRE	\$2.60	\$2.61	\$2.95	\$2.97	\$3.24
EXPORTS TO CHINA & HONG KONG					
TOTAL VALUE AUD	\$297,180,000	\$391,588,000	\$599,703,000	\$720,910,000	\$1,114,806,000
TOTAL VOLUME (LITRES)	44,236,000	61,391,000	99,379,000	125,387,000	188,044,000
\$/LITRE	6.72	6.38	6.03	5.75	5.93

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HOW TO RE-ENGAGE WITH YOUR WINE BRAND LOYALISTS

Returning customers spend on average 67 percent more than first-time customers. That's a good reason to re-engage with the people who love your brand.

WORDS ROBIN SHAW, WINE TOURISM AUSTRALIA & SANDRA HESS, DTC WINE WORKSHOPS

ineries face three big challenges in direct to consumer (DTC) wine sales today: Challenge #1 -

Increasing competition from other sectors in the online space.

Challenge # 2 – Problems collecting relevant consumer data.

Challenge #3 – Declining club conversion.
According to the NAB Online Retail Sales
Index , Australians spent \$21.65 billion
shopping online in 2017. Despite the plethora
of international options now available, 79
percent of spend was on domestic products,
dominated by department stores and fashion.



Unsurprisingly, most online purchases were made by people residing in the major cities on the east coast, for whom access to products like wine is as easy as opening an app, selecting products based on the app's knowledge of their preferences, and preparing the cheese board while waiting for the wine to arrive.

US wineries are arguably the best in the world at creating profitable wine clubs. However, based on annual industry surveys and direct feedback, conversion rates to club membership average between 8-15 percent of cellar door visitors and 30-40 percent to mailing lists. Not only are these numbers relatively low, they represent a decline in club conversion and retention rates over the past three to five years.

So, what gives? Quite simply, today's wine consumer has a dizzying array of membership options available to them – both within and outside wine and liquor – with less time than ever to re-engage. Selling DTC is being embraced by every conceivable sector, including those that traditionally relied on bricks and mortar retail. Even supermarkets are entering the fray, with the likes of Costco offering a membership-based shopping model that includes invitations to special events as diverse

as dress shirt fitting demonstrations, sampling organic grass-fed beef or having a bottle of whiskey engraved as a Father's Day gift.

Of course, Costco still wants you to go to them - theirs is a cash and carry model - so online shopping and home delivery options aren't available. However, with consumers now willing to purchase everyday items alongside gifts, household services, luxury and big-ticket items online, savvy retailers are upping the ante by offering in-store services that complement the online purchasing behaviour of their customers. You might not find the size of that shoe you like in the store, but the staff will happily check availability online and give you a discount coupon to sweeten the deal. Because they know that once you're in their online store, you're highly likely to make at least one other impulse buy that's been 'selected just for you' before you hit the checkout button.

For Australian wineries, DTC represents a highly lucrative – and growing – sales channel, and one that can be readily controlled; therefore, it's worth investing the time, effort and resources into developing a membership model that reflects both your brand and the desires of your customers, while also equipping your team with the tools and training to ensure it succeeds.

Give your cellar door team more conversion paths

Wineries have tended to focus on club membership conversion as the number one direct customer acquisition path, and it's time to rethink this sales strategy. Avid fans will self-identify if they connect well with your brand and the conversion process is typically based on access versus deep discounts (good news to many wineries wishing to extricate themselves from the discount pricing model). So, let the 'clubbers' convert by offering plenty of visual cues in the cellar door and within printed materials about those all-important access points, while providing existing members with more opportunities to refer new members as an ongoing acquisition strategy.

Closing memberships is one avenue; also give your team the right tools and training to convert repeat customers to your mailing list where you can have an ongoing dialogue that leads to greater engagement and more sales opportunities.



Focus on customer re-engagement strategies

Chief marketing officers across America now have more budget than chief technology offers. Why? Because companies have recognised that customer engagement is now the number one business differentiator. They also know that returning customers spend on average 67 percent more than first-time customers. When analysing client data sets from wineries across the nation, the 'Repeat Customer' segment is the largest, irrespective of region or price-points. Repeat customers are valuable because they refer new visitors, bring friends to parties, post selfies to social outlets while at the winery and brag about time spent with brands on social media.

Here's how to build a direct wine sales conversion strategy focused on the repeat customer segment:

- 1. Define your wine brand's unique list of access points to establish meaningful re-engagement opportunities. While not every brand loyalist will convert to club membership, if a repeat customer is already in your order management system, your cellar door team should be able to view lifetime value information at a glance when pulling up the record in the point of sale.
- 2. Consider how this important customer can be invited back in a more elevated way. Get creative and leverage what you already own. This might be access to seated tastings, back-vintage wines, large formats, VIP seating at the summer concert series, face time with the winery team on a morning hike or private barrel tasting. This is not a one-size-fits-all exercise, so the more data you can collect about your repeat customers, the better you'll be able to develop a cohesive invitation strategy.
- Re-train your frontline staff on how to best position two or three new invitations based on qualifiers at the time of purchase. For

some customers your qualifier might be a case or more purchase at first visit, while for others it may be a \$500+ sale.

- **4.** Think about these two invitations for a moment:
 - A): "Would you like to join our mailing list"? or

 B) "Let's get you in our system now, as
 - our returning customers receive VIP seated tastings whenever they visit the cellar door".

 If you have a lot of out-of-area visitors, perhaps a \$1 flat rate shipping on any reorder is a more effective invitation.

 Get together with your team and brainstorm more meaningful
- 5. When rolling out new invitations and tools, be sure to update the web store as well. Test the new strategy and revisit each quarter to ensure your team is meeting its business goals and share this data with frontline staff to keep them motivated. Consider introducing a seasonal contest to get the cellar door team excited about the new initiatives.

invitations to re-engage.

- 6. Do the right thing with customer data once it's collected. Don't add repeat customers to a drip email marketing list and blast them with deals and discounts every month. DO send personal invitations to re-engage in advance of upcoming events and educational updates from the winemaking team.
- 7. Map out new visitor spaces to maximise conversion success for your frontline staff. If space allows, dedicate the cellar door bar to walk-in's/first-time customers, reserve seated tasting spaces for repeat customers and provide a club lounge area for members. Not only will your staff have a better chance of converting non-members but DTC managers

"DO THE RIGHT THING WITH CUSTOMER DATA ONCE IT'S COLLECTED. DON'T ADD REPEAT CUSTOMERS TO A DRIP EMAIL MARKETING LIST AND BLAST THEM WITH DEALS AND DISCOUNTS EVERY MONTH."

will be able to compare apples with apples when running weekly tracking reports. For example, if you had 1,000 cellar door visitors in June and 400 were club members, your cellar door team had a baseline of 600 prospective visitors to convert to cases, mailing list and club. Dedicated tasting spaces with associated POS profiles will make conversion reporting by visitor space much more accurate and efficient.

Your cellar door is the heart of your DTC wine sales strategy so it's worth taking the time to create an environment that encourages people to visit, linger and engage meaningfully with your brand and well-trained team. ◆

• Sandra and Robin will be among more than a dozen experts presenting at the Wine Industry Impact Conference – Making a Direct Impact on 18 October in Adelaide. Find out more and register at www.wisa.org.au.

Direct Wine Workshops Australia is a collaboration between Robin Shaw, Wine Tourism Australia and Sandra Hess, DTC Wine Workshops. Together they have designed a series of webinars to assist winery teams in establishing and growing DTC sales. Find out more and subscribe for updates at www.winetourismaustralia.com or contact robin@winetourismaustralia.com.au



WHY WINE NEEDS TO WORK ON ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH

Whether you know it or not, your wine brand has been in a solid relationship with Google for some time now. The search engine can do wonders for your business if you take control.

ith the invention of the Internet, smart phones and apps, the way in which we communicate with

each other (and our customers), has changed dramatically over the past twenty years. Being a relatively switched-on bunch, the wine industry has embraced this technology with gusto – particularly when it comes to social media. And why not? When you sell a beautiful product, from a beautiful place and do beautiful things with it, social media makes sense.

Some of the best examples of social content come from the meticulously curated Instagram pages of Australia's wine brands – so you don't need me to tell you how to be social (you are in the business of boozemaking, after all).

What I am here to tell you is, it's time to work on your relationship with Google.

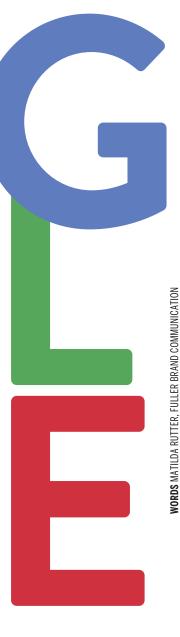
I know this because I (along with 1.17 billion other people) use Google to answer questions, and when I'm lunching with friends in the Adelaide Hills and jump on Google to find 'best cellar doors near Hahndorf' I get a motley selection of outdated tourism blogs and trip advisors; blurry photos of your tasting flights taken by Swedish backpackers; incorrect contact details; and often (oh so often!) a listing for the local bottle shop.

So, let me introduce you to my friend Google. The slightly nerdy, socially awkward but super interesting guy you knew back at school, who you haven't thought about for a while... but he's been thinking about you.

Whether you know it or not, you, your wine brand and your cellar door have actually been in a solid relationship with Google since he made his way onto the Internet in 1998. And whether you like it or not, Google knows a lot about you. Who you are, what you sell, who likes you (and why), and he's been waiting patiently to show you how great he is for years.

While social media is that cool guy with the nice hair and the big house with a pool, an expert at 'brand awareness' and certainly worth having at your party (and in your marketing strategy), Google is the nice guy that listens to your needs and answers your questions.

When you want information, when you want to learn something or want to make decisions, you go to Google. You just never realised how much you (and your wine brand) needed him,



until now. And you're not alone. There are more than two trillion searches on Google a day. It's currently 9.33 in the morning and there have already been 2,368,145,356 searches on Google since midnight.

With all that being said, the quiet types are often the hardest to approach. If you've ever plucked up the courage to say 'hi' to Google, I understand that the first encounter can be a bit scary – which is where I come in. I'm your Google match maker. I'm so close to Google we hang out on weekends and I'm here to tell you he's one of a kind!

Like all complex, brooding types, there are four parts to Google, so I am going to break them down by ease of approach.

Google My Business (GMB)

Google is very good at making assumptions about you, so make sure you take control of the relationship from the get-go – it's your way or the highway.

Which brings me to Google Maps. Did you know that 'Get directions to (the closest winery, cellar door, cheese platter)...' is among the top 10 Google search terms every single day?

The problem is that when Google Maps started out, it needed a way of figuring out the location of businesses so that users could find them. It did this by searching the Internet for information about your business and your location, and more than likely created a Google My Business listing for you...without you even knowing about it.

This isn't always the case, so if you're not sure, just Google your wine brand or your cellar door to find out if a listing already exists

The trick is, because Google put this information together himself, the information about your business may not be exactly right or on-brand – like photos of your tasting flights taken by a German backpacker who knows nothing about lighting, an old logo, or the wrong contact details – and unless you take control of your listing there's no way of ensuring the information out there about your business is correct (or flattering).

Enter Google My Business, a free tool that was created alongside Google Maps that allows you to either:

- a) Create your own GMB listing (if you don't already have one); or
- b) Claim your brand or cellar door's existing profile that Google made for you

Head to GMB and take control of your messaging, make sure your address is correct and allow Google to continue promoting you for free – just on your terms.

Google Analytics (GA)

Google is a bit of a stalker and kind of a know-it-all. While that may seem creepy and annoying at first, if you use his talents for good rather than evil, you'll reap the rewards

Google Analytics is another free tool Google offers. It's easy to set up and very easy for your website developer to install. On a basic level GA tracks your website's traffic, where it comes from and how it performs. But this is nowhere near as cool as it gets.

GA can also tell you the demographics of your customers, where they live, what they are interested in, what they are in the market to buy ('Margaret River Chardonnay' or 'cellar doors with cheese platters') and how often they come to your website and buy something.

At its very least, if you just let GA sit on your website for a year (and do nothing else), the data it could provide you with would be enough to inform your business strategy not just how to market your wine, but what wines you should make and for whom.

Google Ads

Despite being a bit socially awkward, Google has this uncanny talent of connecting you with the right people at the right time.

Google Ads refers to a myriad of things, but at the most basic level Google Ads are the first listings you see on Google at the top of the page when you have searched for something.

Want to be Google's answer to 'best cellar doors Hunter Valley?', or let the whole of South Australia know that you really are 'the best Barossa Shiraz?' - then get yourself acquainted with Google Ads.

When approached correctly, Google Ads brings in highly targeted traffic – people who are in the market to buy whatever it is you are selling. Google Ads' algorithms have become so sophisticated and have learnt so much about you and your audiences that they will only show adverts to the people most likely to act upon them.

You can also run advertising on other websites, adverts on YouTube and invest in remarketing. Ever had a bottle of wine follow you around the internet after heading to a competitor's website? That's remarketing, and it is advertising gold.

Google Ads is not only one of the cheapest forms of advertising out there, it also has the highest ROI. Which makes it perfect for small to medium sized wine businesses looking to dip their toes in to the Google Ads pool.

It is not for the faint hearted, if you want to give it a crack yourself please spend at least a couple of weeks watching YouTube tutorials or you will blow your budgets. Don't have the head space for that? No problem, a certified Google professional (Google match makers just like me) will happily help you out.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

When Google likes you, he loves to tell everyone how great you are. In its simplest form, Search Engine Optimisation is about answering people's questions better than anyone else.

Have you ever visited a website that was loading so slowly that you left? Have you ever clicked on a mobile website and only been able to view half the page? Have you added a bottle of wine to your cart only to be redirected to an error page?

If you have experienced any of the above, these websites did not provide you with a simple answer to your question. SEO is the art of mixing great content (words, images and video) with smart technology so that you have a website that loads fast and is easy to read and engaging. While the end result is simple, getting a website to do all these things is not so simple – it requires planning strategy skill and time

SEO is not free, you will pay in either time or money, but taking time to figure out the best way to answer your customers' questions ('how is wine made?' or 'where to eat in the Yarra Valley') is an important investment in the future of your business and your ongoing relationship with Google.

GMB and GA are free and easy to set up – if you do nothing else, do these two things. If you want to take your relationship to the next level, Google Ads is well worth the investment, and if you are really committed to making the relationship work long term, think SEO all the way. •

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made in South Africa. "The lightly oaked (my favourite) and unoaked. As it ages, the flavour profile becomes increasingly rich and complex in both aroma and flavour.

Undertones of marmalade honey and nuts emerge and sometimes a touch of front palate sweetness, with the wine finishing crisp and dry." He says that as with classic ageworthy Hunter Semillon, ageworthy Chenin Blanc is a product of its upbringing, with vine age and dry-grown viticulture playing a big part in ensuring the ageability of these wines.

In the areas of Coteaux du Layon,
Bonnezeaux and Quarts de Chaume, Chenin
Blanc is produced as superb long-living sweet
dessert wines. A few years ago I remember
being enraptured by a 30-year-old bottle of
Chateau Bellerive Quarts de Chaume. It was
golden yellow, had nutty, buttery aromas and
was absolutely divine, rich and sweet, but in a
different style to that of Sauterne.

In Vouvray, Chenin Blanc is often used to make the delicious Crémant de Loire sparkling wine, which is more approachable and less austere than Champagne. It also produces an enormous volume of quality dry whites. One of the stars of the region, Domaine Huet produces a range of Chenin Blanc wines, the sweetest of which ensures they are easily capable of living for half a century and are utterly sublime.

In the AOC's (Appellation Origen Controlee) of Saumur, Savènnieres, Jasnières and in the Languedoc region, Chenin Blanc produces dry white wines ranging from simple quaffers through to serious, complex wines.

Chenin Blanc has been in Australia for a long time but has not really fired up with consumers. A surprising number of Western Australian wineries that were approached for samples for this tasting, did not submit them. But those that did, the wines were excellent.

A big thanks to those wineries kind enough to send back vintages so we could assess how the variety ages. Special thanks to Ross Gehrig at John Gehrig Wines who sent five vintages of King River Chenin Blanc ranging from their 2018 back through to a bottle of 1991 from the cellar, which unfortunately, while it had a glorious golden colour, was corked.

The notable wines in the tasting were:

Anderson 2012 Methode Traditionelle
Chenin Blanc – Yeasty, nutty, plenty of green
apples. Delightful.

Paul Conti Lorenza Sparkling Chenin Blanc NV – A hint of sweetness and great flavours. Easy drinking.

Kalleske 2018 Florentine Barossa Chenin Blanc – Recently bottled, needs time to settle down but showing great potential.

John Gehrig Wines 2018 King River
Chenin Blanc – Lovely varietal aromas,
scented, nutty, with a hint of lanolin, smooth,
rich, appley flavours. Sensational. The John
Gehrig samples consisted of their 2016, 2013,
2002 and 1991 vintage Chenin. While the
1991 was corked, the others showed the
progression of maturity as the variety ages.
Over time the colour becomes more yellow
and deeper, the wine becomes more complex
and mellower as the inherent acidity slowly
fades into the background. The 2002 was
sensational: golden yellow, smooth, slightly
higher viscosity and totally gorgeous. An
amazing wine.

Coriole 2017 McLaren Vale Chenin Blanc – Elegant and subtle aromas of apple blossom and rose petals, great mouthfeel, smooth. A well-balanced all-rounder. Coriole included a bottle of their 2007 Chenin Blanc, which was complex, developed, mellow and very delicious. As one judge said, "Nice attitude." It amply demonstrated the ability of their Chenin to cellar for many years.

Rusden Christian 2017 Barossa Chenin Blanc – Vibrant aromas, delicate flavours, full of finesse.

Dowie Doole 2017 McLaren Vale Chenin Blanc – Lashings of lime/citrus, crisp and clean with hints of green apples on the zingy palate. Delicious. At five years older their 2012 Tintookie Chenin showed how gracefully this variety ages for a white wine, and that inherent acidity in the variety takes a long time to drift off into the background. Dowie Doole sent a bottle of their 2017 Blanc2, a blend of Chenin Blanc and Sav Blanc – this was a crisp, zingy wine that has a degree of complexity and is ideally suited to an antipasto or picnic fare.

Anderson Winery 2017 Rutherglen Chenin Blanc – Crisp and zingy. A great alternative for Sav Blanc drinkers. Gwynnyth Vineyards 2017 Pyrenees

Fume Chenin Blanc – Big, lively aromas with a hint of smokiness, complex, delicious with sweet orange flavours. Exceptional. Their 2015 and 2010 vintages ably demonstrated the maturation progression of Chenin from a crisp young thing, through a 'gangly' stage to a graceful, mature adult.

Paul Conti 2017 Tuart Block Carabooda Chenin Blanc – Crisp, zingy and austere style built for the long haul. Needs food to show its best right now.

Woody Nook Woodcote 2017 Margaret
River Chenin Blanc – Alluring apple and green
pea aromas. On the palate it's bright, crisp,
lively and well balanced. A pleasure to drink.

Bella Ridge Estate 2011 WA Chenin Blanc – Amazing, perfumed floral aromas, smooth, rich, very elegant with an appealing slightly smoky character. A complex wine. Their 2004 vintage was spectacular not only for its unique lemongrass aromas and smooth, rich flavours, but mainly because it belied its 14 years of age – looking more like a six to eight year old. This wine will live for a long time. Sensational. Bella Ridge also supplied a sample of their 2012 Demi-Sec Chenin Blanc, which was divinely

"Over the past 50 years the plantings of Chenin Blanc in France, mainly in the Loire region, have declined by 30-40 percent and now there is just under 10,000 hectares grown."

creamy and sweet; not uber sweet - more like Spaetlese wines used to be. Made from old vine grapes, perfectly balanced with a good dollop of honey flavours on the palate. Marvellous.

We have not fully defined the style of Chenin Blanc we are making in Australia, like France and South Africa have. But we are gradually heading down that path so that in a decade or so the differences between the crisp, austere style and the richer style will be more evident and easier to define. Take a few for a test drive and see where your preference lies. Mine is definitely with the richer, aged style – a real class act.

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Covery John Me Covery Jew Me Cow V

One of the keys to a successful wine club is getting to know each and every member intimately. Upset them at your peril.

WORDS CATHY GADD

t takes a fair bit to piss me off. Okay, Trump can get me riled up in a nanosecond as can most things in Australian politics, but largely I'm chilled. The wine industry is pretty much my fave industry; I am a staunch supporter, advocate and customer. But this week you managed to get me hot and huffy. That's not totally fair. In fact a particular winery - keeping with a political theme, let's call them Barnaby Estate - managed to peeve me right off. But it makes a good case study as I suspect they are not alone in the error of their ways.

Seventeen years ago we joined a winebuying group that has a long history with Barnaby Estate - some 40 plus years. Every year since, we, with our wine friends, have religiously trekked to the winery for a brilliant day of vertical and horizontal tastings. Barnaby Estate does an excellent job, we get fantastic service and it's our favourite tasting of the year. Given we do mega wine tastings, that's really saying something.

So every year for 17 years I have bought four or five dozen premium wines at this tasting. Their current vintage wines retail for between \$30 and \$85, so it's my biggest single annual wine purchase.

As a wine enthusiast I am not monogamous: I drink around. I am easily distracted by a new wine love – I fall easily and often. There's that rush of excitement when I find a new wine love interest and the upshot is a diverse and awesome cellar. I love you all, but I'm a swinger.

So when I say I have been buying from this winery for 17 years, it's a big deal. It's true love and they are the only winery I am actually in a loving and permanent relationship with. Or so I thought.

A few years back when Barnaby
Estate made significant changes to
the structure of their wine club, they
offered our group a special
membership (let's call it the Cru
Club) which recognised our
loyalty. We received regular info

"It's true love and they are the only winery I am actually in a loving and permanent relationship with. Or so I thought." and a birthday magnum from them every year. Life was sweet.

But then I noticed that I hadn't been getting emails from Barnaby – it had been quite a while since I heard from them. I mean, come on, I'm a customer who actually wants emails – how rare is that? They had a number of special milestone celebrations with their top members and our friends asked why we weren't attending.

It occurred to me that I had quit corporate life and not updated my email address, which saw us slip out of the Cru Club. Doh, my bad. Realising what had happened, I emailed the Cru Club manager and asked to be reinstated, only to be told they have no record of me being part of the club and as it's a closed shop, there is no way in.

My first reaction was shock and disbelief, as if I'd been sucker-punched.

I asked them to look up my buying history to verify who we are. It turns out our history only goes back a couple of years to when we became part of the Cru Club and all my previous purchases over 15 years were logged under the original organiser.

There are more than 20 in our group and we buy close to a pallet each visit. This means our organiser is an insane super-buyer and the rest of us were non-existent. These people faithfully turn up and buy wine every year – some of them for well over 30 years – and weren't on their radar that entire time.

This was weird. I was arguing with Barnaby and trying to convince them what a huge fan, ambassador and long-term loyal customer I am, with about 35 dozen of their premium wines still in my cellar. We escalated it to no avail and, frustrated, my hubby took a shot to sort it. No cigar.

I have madly championed this brand and introduced countless people to them because

they make excellent wines. I was crushed when it emerged that mine is a totally unrequited love. I thought what we had was real, and feel duped into thinking they loved me, too.

How could I have been taken in for so long? I felt so foolish and embarrassed. Where had it gone wrong?

They did offer to sign us up to their Premium Wine Club, which compels us to take a preselected dozen every year. So they wanted us to commit to one dozen instead of the four to five dozen we buy annually.

If I can put aside my bruised and battered ego, this is such a missed opportunity by Barnaby Estate. It's a procedural breakdown, a blind spot on who their good customers, serious buyers and loyal brand champions are. There are not many out there that buy at this group's level and I don't think any winery can afford to take them for granted.

So, a question for you. Do you have such regular tasting groups that buy well, and do you know the individuals or just the organiser? If that's the case, it's time to get the details of all attendees and start tracking order history or ensuring they are signed up to your club in their own right.

Communicating and continuing to engage with these individuals, recognising their loyalty, is a basic starting point.

The pain is real. Heartbreak hurts a lot – it's a life-changing injury. My passion for Barnaby after 17 years has cooled. I am wary but hope to some day fully mend myself emotionally.

Will our wine relationship survive? Only time will tell. \blacklozenge

Cathy Gadd is an ex-corporate marketing executive and a wine geek. Contact her on Instagram @cathy.gadd



ROCK STARS

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE OF MCLAREN VALE GEOLOGY McLaren Vale winemakers arguably discuss rocks and soils more than any other wine region. And they have their very own geology map to prove it.

WORDS STEVE LESZCZYNSKI

t's a Wednesday afternoon and I'm being driven around Yangarra Estate vineyards in McLaren Vale with CEO/ winemaker Peter Fraser behind the wheel. We chat about his new philosophy on aggressive leaf plucking, and about picking at lower sugars for better tannin development which leads to better flavour maturation. We even talk about his use of fantail pigeons in the vineyard as bait for the raptors which chase grape-eating birds away.

Fraser is a considered and meticulous individual and his accolades speak for themselves.

Chatting about his work at Yangarra Estate, he tells me, "Lots that we do is unique in the Vale. It's more like what you'd see in Yarra or



cooler sites." Coming up to the famed High Sands vineyard, Nikki Webster's 'Strawberry Kisses' comes through the car's speakers. Fate or fluke? Perhaps Fraser is pushing boundaries with his music choices now, too.

We chat some more about his newfound philosophy on leaf thinning. The wet vintage of 2011 was the trigger and the 2018 heatwave tested the theory – they came through ok. The lack of airflow through the vines meant something had to be done. They had success and the dial of experimentation has been cranked that little bit more each year since. Move forward to the present, and in the space of a few weeks, the whole vineyard is completed – the best blocks done by hand and the remaining sites by an automatic vine plucker.

Fraser bleeds McLaren Vale, but says the biggest downfall of the region is sloppy canopy management. I get a sense he is out to set the trend, and it seems others are following his lead given the results. Before long, our conversation turns to the dirt. The sand, its depth, the ironstone underlying much of it—we could have explored the topic for hours.

Before visiting Fraser, I spent some time with Brad Hickey. We ate ribs and drank well. In the presence of Andy Coppard (Lino Ramble), Julian Forwood and Bernice Ong (Ministry of Clouds) and Adam Hooper (La Curio), talk kept coming back to the McLaren Vale dirt. I was fascinated and intrigued. I needed to dig around myself.

Sand, clay and ironstone were the buzzwords that continued to reverberate during each visit to wine producers. But it was the reference to what seems to be the McLaren Vale gospel that captured my attention the most.

"You've got to speak with Philip White," Hickey demands in his cool, calm tone.

So I did. I could hear the rattle of ironstone in White's voice and sense Maslin sand running deep in his veins. He was one of the driving forces behind the now-iconic PIRSA map, The Geology of the McLaren Vale Wine Region.

As a miner who spent years in the South Australian Department of Mines, White knows the geological formations of the region inside out. Every winemaker I spoke to in the region referred to the map. Every single one. White seemed surprised when I mentioned this to him. Inwardly, I could sense a proud fist-pump moment. But he threw all credit to his mate W.A. "Bill" Fairburn, who White claimed did most of the leg work. Back in 1974/75 Fairburn began spending weekends inspecting the Vale geology – all unpaid but driven by passion.

White says that, back in those days, the Mines Department was the best geological mapping department in the world. "It was an academic triumph to get that many brains in one department," he says.

Originally, the goal was to map all South Australian wine regions, but in those heady Dunstan days when ore bodies like Roxby were being discovered, it was impossible to get funding for investigations of vignoble geology.

"In the end, we just wanted to create a tool which would help growers avoid planting vines in the wrong place," White says.

Later on, I got a sense he was almost revealing some secretive information. "You



know, some of the best geology is not yet planted," he says. "My favourite potential viniculture sites are in the rubbly Kurrajong Formation – a complex mixture of rocks which have fallen down the Willunga Faultline Escarpment all the way from Sellicks Hill to Kangarilla."

"It's tricky talking one particular geology up, or having a favourite. Nobody wants to be on inferior rocks, but they stay where their dad planted on the flats – where it was easiest, but rarely the best."

"To a geologist, soil is like dandruff. We know it's the rocks below – the source of the dirt – that makes all the difference. McLaren Vale has yet to learn the difference."

Listening to White, the McLaren Vale soils can be broken into three categories – sand, clay and Blewitt Springs. This annoys White, who says, "Australia doesn't have much soil. Look at the road cuttings: it's usually only a few inches deep. To a geologist, soil is like dandruff. We know it's the rocks below – the source of the dirt – that makes all the difference. McLaren Vale has yet to learn the difference."

Often when McLaren Vale is spoken about, Blewitt Springs comes up soon after. I've even had winemakers from other regions tell me there is nothing of use in McLaren Vale unless it's from Blewitt Springs. The more I scratched at the surface, the more detail was revealed. The sand accentuates fragrance, and tasting

wines from these sites made that evident.

Selina Kelly and husband Andre Bondar bought the famed Rayner block a few years ago based on the simple reason they love the style of wine produced from the sand. "The sand gives us lighter, fragrant and savoury characters for the wines we want to make and love to drink," Selina says. "It's just prettier."

Clay and ironstone rich soils deliver powerful and richer characters where meaty and metallic nuances can be seen. Brad Hickey says, "Red loam clay delivers voluptuous fruit."

These words are echoed by Oliver's Taranga winemaker Corrina Wright. "Old rocks give heaps of structure while also providing density for the mid-palate," she says. "Blewitt Springs, on the other hand, is finer and more floral."

Wright says there is more light and shade in McLaren Vale Grenache due to the influences of the soil types. Her Grenache has tannin but mid-palate weight, and is structured, whereas Grenache from Blewitt Springs has finer tannins and is prettier.

Admittedly, Blewitt Springs is the dance floor for the best Grenache in the district. It ripens up to three weeks after the warmer sites and due to the shape of the hills from the gulf, 50-150 mL more rain is received than lower parts.

The sand at the acclaimed High Sands site at Yangarra Estate runs several metres deep in places. Grenache, which thrives in struggling conditions, has found a happy home here.

The rise of McLaren Vale Grenache continues to surpass expectations. Late in 2017 and prior to the 2018 vintage, Corrina Wright fielded six calls from winemakers looking for fruit. She turned each one down.

More than ever, the quality of fruit and thoughtful consideration given to vineyard conditions has ensured that Grenache is having its time in the spotlight. Thanks to Fairburn, White and Co., winemakers in the region have never been better informed.

The Geology of the McLaren Vale Wine Region is something that needs to be continually updated. Not reviewed since its release in 2010, Philip White says such complex documents are like "detective stories that continually unfold".

"There are a few sites that need to be redrawn," he says. "The winemakers were dead-keen to use it to delineate sub-regions for marketing purposes, even when they knew bits of it needed correcting. I advised them it was too early and risky."

Winemaker Tim Geddes feels the proposed sub-region Chester Osborn wanted named Beautiful View (from his Cube to the McLaren Vale township) as the most inconsistent on the map.

Time will tell come the next update of the map – something that deserves to be maintained for the future prosperity of the region. ◆

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WINE HAS BEEN LONG APPRECIATED AS THE TREASURE





A place that is designed for a great wine tourism experience should be like climbing into a treasure map, says wine tourism architect Amy Smedley.

WORDS AMY SMEDLEY PHOTOS PHIL HANDFORTH

y daughter is into adventure books. You know the ones where the hero goes on an exciting journey across foreign lands? My favourites are the ones that have a map inside the front cover. Great lands are revealed with intriguing features that spark your imagination – places that come to represent the successes and challenges of the hero's journey, and act as guides on the path

toward the treasure. We can be captivated by the story, follow the hero's journey, understand their destination and appreciate the treasure... but the intricate details of the map allow us to climb inside those places and imagine our own part in the adventure.

We go back to those books time and time again. They have become classics in our house because they offer more than a story or map. They bring to life a place – landscapes, buildings and spaces – where we can imagine

NOW WE MUST CREATE THE MAP





the part we would play and how we might obtain that treasure ourselves.

If the treasure is the wine, then to create wine tourism, bring your story to life. Let visitors climb into the treasure map that is your place, understand your story, and take home some treasure.

When tourists visit your place, they want your story to be so tangible that they can read it in your walls, feel like they are climbing in to be part of it, and creating a memorable story of their own to tell. You are the hero of your story. It is your adventure that people want to be part of, and the landmarks along the way represent the challenges and successes that have shaped your business, brand and place. Create landmarks that bring your story to life for your visitors and you will have achieved a truly authentic and unique tourism offering.

Sounds good? It can be as simple as telling people how you came to be doing what you're doing, allowing them to follow along in their own time to understand your journey and appreciate the treasures. But to create a truly unmissable experience, they must be able to imagine their own part in the adventure. •

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Telling stories through buildings requires careful planning and more interpretation from the visitor. But beautifully executed spaces can speak louder than words, to more people than your staff can possibly speak to in a day, and in a universal yet entirely personal language. Buildings can create a place where a story unfolds, just like a treasure map in an adventure book, and shape an experience that is not just memorable, but a story in its own right.

Atmosphere

Create a setting that has a tangible mood and personality. The character of your brand will guide you to decide what atmosphere you want to create.

Plan the journey

Map out what you want to tell people in a logical sequence. Arrange your journey to reveal a bit at a time and allow people to take their time moving through. Create a little mystery and intrigue but maintain sight lines that motivate people to keep going.

Landmarks

Create landmarks that unfold your story in more detail. Use sight, sound, touch, taste and smell to imply how you felt at those moments and invoke a reaction in your visitor.

Identify key elements

Be realistic about what is achievable and cost effective, and what is important and valuable. Find the vital classic elements that tell the story and are important to your brand, and lose what is not.

Sell the treasure

To truly complete the adventure, the hero must possess the treasure. Think of the tasting as a part of the journey and adventure, and the wine purchase as obtaining the treasure.



WORDS PAUL DENNIS

ictoria's wine industry is a vital element of the state's agriculture portfolio. It directly adds \$7.6 billion to the Victorian economy and provides nearly 13,000 jobs, most of these in regional areas with young adults a key beneficiary.

The threat that looms large, though, is ongoing management of the biosecurity challenges posed by phylloxera. The story is all too familiar for many in the state's industry. Once established, the long-term impacts of the pest result in the ultimate replacement of affected own root vines, costing grapegrowers up to \$60,000 a hectare to replant with resistant rootstocks and to put regulatory quarantine and biosecurity measures in place.

At last estimates, there are 540 winegrape growers with 4,416 hectares of vines under production within the Victorian Phylloxera Risk Zone (PRZ). These growers are constantly at risk of becoming infested with phylloxera from other properties/regions due to the unknown status of phylloxera freedom within the PRZ.

To help build a more sustainable and profitable future, the Victorian Government is making phylloxera management a key priority of its agriculture agenda, by contributing nearly \$2 million over the next three years to combat the spread of the pest, particularly into new grapegrowing areas, and mitigate its effects where it exists.

The funding is being used to deliver a suite of six projects under the umbrella of the Tackling Phylloxera Program. Although separate, these six projects function collaboratively to take a rounded approach to better phylloxera management. They will also go a long way to improving our understanding of the science underpinning good biosecurity management, reduce economic impacts associated with phylloxera and promote a national approach to its management through greater collaboration

with peak industry groups and state biosecurity agencies.

The top billing project to rezone the Mornington Peninsula a Phylloxera Exclusion Zone (PEZ) has already passed its first hurdle with flying colours. Year 1 surveys for the PEZ project began on 8 January this year and were completed on 21 March. At the completion of the project, a total of 224 vineyards comprising 1,029.46 hectares were successfully surveyed.

No phylloxera was detected in any of the surveyed vineyards over this period. With the success of the project to date, an 'Interim PEZ' will function in the region until years two and three of the survey are completed. This prevents the movement of phylloxera risk host materials from other parts of Victoria into the Mornington Peninsula region. Nevertheless, for the duration of the survey project, the Mornington Peninsula region will maintain its position as a Phylloxera Restricted Zone (PRZ) for moving host material out of the region.



THE THREAT LOOMS LARGE

For the region's producers, it begins a new means for moving phylloxera host risk produce across state borders or between other phylloxera zones. The 'Gate to Gate (G2G) Movement' app for use on smartphones and tablets has been co-developed by Agriculture Victoria and the Mornington Peninsula Vignerons Association to help producers move their phylloxera host risk materials between the Mornington Peninsula and other Victorian wine producing regions and zones. Winemakers in the region can download the app from the App Store or Google Play, which will become available statewide as a similar PEZ rezoning program for other regions rolls out.

Other projects under way include developing innovative diagnostic tools for faster phylloxera detection and establishing a long-term vision for phylloxera management and containment in Victoria. This one is geared to generate a national discussion on the status of the National Phylloxera Management Protocols, regarding their roles, strengths and limitations surrounding a risk-based approach to biosecurity management.

Another project is aiming to create a new

understanding of an old paradigm. A six months social research examination of the industry's behaviours and attitudes towards phylloxera management and containment sets out to understand why best practice biosecurity measures are, or are not, being carried out on-farm.

Face-to-face interviews are being conducted with many dozens of growers and vineyard managers across all parts of Victoria's winegrowing regions. This work will hopefully develop a clearer understanding of how current social systems impact phylloxera management and identify the barriers growers and property managers face to adopting best practice phylloxera and biosecurity management.

Large and small producers across the Yarra Valley were first to be involved in the investigation. Without too many surprises, early results of the research show people and machinery movement appear to pose the highest risk for spreading phylloxera. There will be cries of "I told you so", but the reasons behind it are financially and socially complex and finding a solution will be problematic.

More data like this will be collected from all Victoria's wine regions and presented at a

statewide conference late this year. The conference will provide an opportunity for government, community and industry to convene to deliberate on and model what future phylloxera management systems and communications to growers could look like to deliver real and permanent change for better biosecurity practices.

The Tackling Phylloxera Program is the Victorian Government's initiative to support the state's economically important wine industry. It's a strong signal the door is wide open for meaningful collaboration with the wine industry to develop sustainable and long-term improvements around phylloxera management practices.

At the same time, the program makes us all aware that long-term management of phylloxera is a shared responsibility involving industry and government, with all parties needing to work together in more cooperative ways to manage phylloxera.

For more information visit www. agriculture.vic.gov.au/tacklingphylloxera •

Paul Dennis is communications manager of the Tackling Phylloxera Program for Agriculture Victoria. Email paul.dennis@ecodev.vic.gov.au





Ningxia gets so cold they have to bury the vines in the winter. But their status as a serious wine region is growing.

WORDS DAN TRAUCKI

very now and then wine critics and wine drinkers 'discover' a new winemaking region that is worthy of their attention. It is usually an old established region which has either lifted its winemaking game or had up until then been keeping to itself for reasons such as, it could sell all the wine it made locally, or its wines were used by producers in other regions as blending material.

A prime example of this are the wines of Greece. Until the GFC the vast majority of their production was sold locally to the hordes of Northern European and American tourists who used to flock there each year for the sunshine and beautiful waters. When the tourists stopped coming due to the GFC, the better, less hidebound Greek winemakers lifted their game and started to seek export markets for their now-world-class wines. 'All of a sudden' over the past decade the Greek wines have come to the attention of many more people in the wine drinking world.

Likewise with the wines of Georgia. Few people outside of Eastern Europe had heard of them until the last decade. Their diversification started in 2006 when Russia, which accounted for 85 percent of their exports, put an embargo on their wines. The Georgians started looking for new markets, starting with China, which now accounts for about 25 percent of their exports, and then moving on to Western Europe and the rest of Asia – especially with the great story they had to tell of their ancient winemaking techniques using qvervi. In this timeframe they have gone from relatively unknown to quite well known and regarded. You can even buy Georgian wines in Australia (see www.tamada.com.au).

A great example of the second type of discovery is McLaren Vale, which until the mid-1990s was unknown to most wine drinkers outside of Adelaide. They had been making great wine for decades, but most of it ended up with the big corporates that used it for blending without acknowledging it, thus very few people knew of the region. Over the past 20 years McLaren Vale has done a superb job of promoting itself and is

now a world renowned wine region.

So today, who has heard of the Ningxia winegrowing region of China?

It is a small, autonomous region in the central-northwest of the country, 500 to 600 kilometres west-southwest of Beijing and south of Inner Mongolia. It is a sparsely populated Gobi Desert region which features part of the Great Wall of China on its northeastern boundary. In recent times a large system of canals has been built to facilitate agriculture, which now includes a rapidly expanding number of vineyards.

In 2011 this winegrowing region, which sits on the eastern foothills of the Helan Mountains range, about 1,200 metres above sea level, first came to be noticed when a Chinese wine, He Lan Qing Xue Jia Bei Lan 2009 (a Cabernet blend) won a Decanter World Wine Awards International Trophy – for the Red Bordeaux Varietal over £10.

The Ningxia wine region only came into existence some 30 years ago when the first vineyards were planted. However, like so many other things in China, the development since then has been at breakneck speed. Today there are just over 100 wineries with about 200,000 hectares of vineyards. Quite a number of these wineries have large French wine Chateau-style buildings with some exact replicas of Bordeaux Chateau and in some of these cases more effort is focused on the appearance of the estate than on the quality of the vines and wines.

A number of new wineries are under construction and it is expected that within the next five years the acreage under vine will double.

In China there is a heavy leaning towards Cabernet Sauvignon as the primary red variety due to their early and continued exposure to the wines of Bordeaux. The second most popular red wine, unsurprisingly, is Merlot, with Cabernet Gernischt (Carménère) becoming quite popular recently, and sometimes being confused with Cabernet Sauvignon. To add to the confusion, some of the plantings of Cabernet Gernischt are in fact Cabernet Franc. Cabernet Merlot blends are also very popular.



In the whites, Chardonnay is predominant but Sauvignon Blanc is making a pretty good play at becoming very popular.

I recently attended a tasting of nine Ningxia wines organised by Dr Ruyi Li, who is working for the University of Ningxia as a lecturer. The tasting was mainly aimed at Adelaide Chinese restaurateurs to see if they would be interested in ranging some of these wines in their establishments, as well as to Chinese students over here studying viticulture and oenology.

The one white wine in the line-up was Helan Mountain Chardonnay 2016 from Pernod Ricard, which was a good, slightly oaky Chardonnay with good crisp acidity and a refreshing finish. It retails for a realistic AUD\$15 per bottle.

The first of the reds was JinZun Reserve
Cabernet Sauvignon 2016, a blend of 85
percent Cabernet and 15 percent Marselan.
Marselan is a variety created in France, in 1961,
by crossing Cabernet Sauvignon with
Grenache. This wine had plenty of elegant
flavours but like most of the reds that followed,
it had a tight astringent finish that had a hint
of greenness. It is definitely a food wine
needing rich food to overcome the astringency.

The other wines tasted were:

Domaine Yi Shuang Cabernet Sauvignon 2014: Quite complex with hints of menthol and very tight on the finish.

Pushan Marselan 2014: Massively deep in colour with soft aromas and big, smooth, round, complex flavours. It is delicious but still very tight on the finish.

Kanaan Winery Pretty Pony Cabernet Sauvignon 2013: Maturing nicely, showing development characters and is available here through Dan Murphy's. Domaine Shapotou Cabernet Gernischt 2015: Deeply coloured, lovely aromas with masses of smooth, rich flavours and a smidge softer on the finish compared to its colleagues.

Li's Family Treasures Cabernet Sauvignon 2015: Masses of flavour, but with tight astringent tannins – a great, classy food wine.

Legacy Peak Helan Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon 2014: This winery has the oldest Cabernet vines in the region at 17 years old.

Ho-Lan-Soul Shiraz 2014: A rich, elegant, cool-climate Shiraz and by far the most expensive wine in the line-up with a price tag of AUD\$600

I believe that astringency is inherent in the red wines due to the vines needing to be buried for the winter to protect them from the bitter cold of up to minus 30 degrees celsius. This is done by bending the vines over as far as possible and then covering them with soil for the winter. This is labour intensive with about 100 people burying one to two hectares a day, as the vines need to be covered with at least 20 to 30 cm of soil to keep them safe. In the spring they then need to be dug up, which in effect shortens the growing season. It is this shorter growing season that results in higher levels of malic acid than lactic acid in the wine, giving it the harsher astringency.

The other downside of this process is that each time the vines are buried, some vines, mainly the older ones, will snap and need to be replaced. Current estimates put this figure at five to eight percent a year. It is most unlikely that this region will ever have 'old vine' wines as it is believed that the life expectancy of a vine under these conditions is unlikely to go past 20 to 25 years. Interestingly, being in effect desert, the summer temperatures often reach 35 degrees celsius or more.

The red wines can be lower in alcohol, slightly lighter and less concentrated than those from other more 'normal' growing regions. Then those with 14 percent plus alcohol, as mentioned earlier, tend to have phenolic, astringent, herbaceous tannins which often means that the wines are only really suitable to be enjoyed with food.

In February 2014 I attended a tasting of 30 Chinese wines at the same venue, also organised by Dr Li, and the wines she presented then were of significantly lesser quality than those presented this time around. Back then the majority of the red wines had a considerable degree of greenness, and the tannins were quite a bit harder and harsher. All of the wines ranged from acceptable quality through to pretty darn good and just need to accompany food to make them even more enjoyable. The better ones were approaching being of world-class quality. It is obvious that significantly more effort is being made today with viticulture and winemaking within the region and this will only keep improving over time.

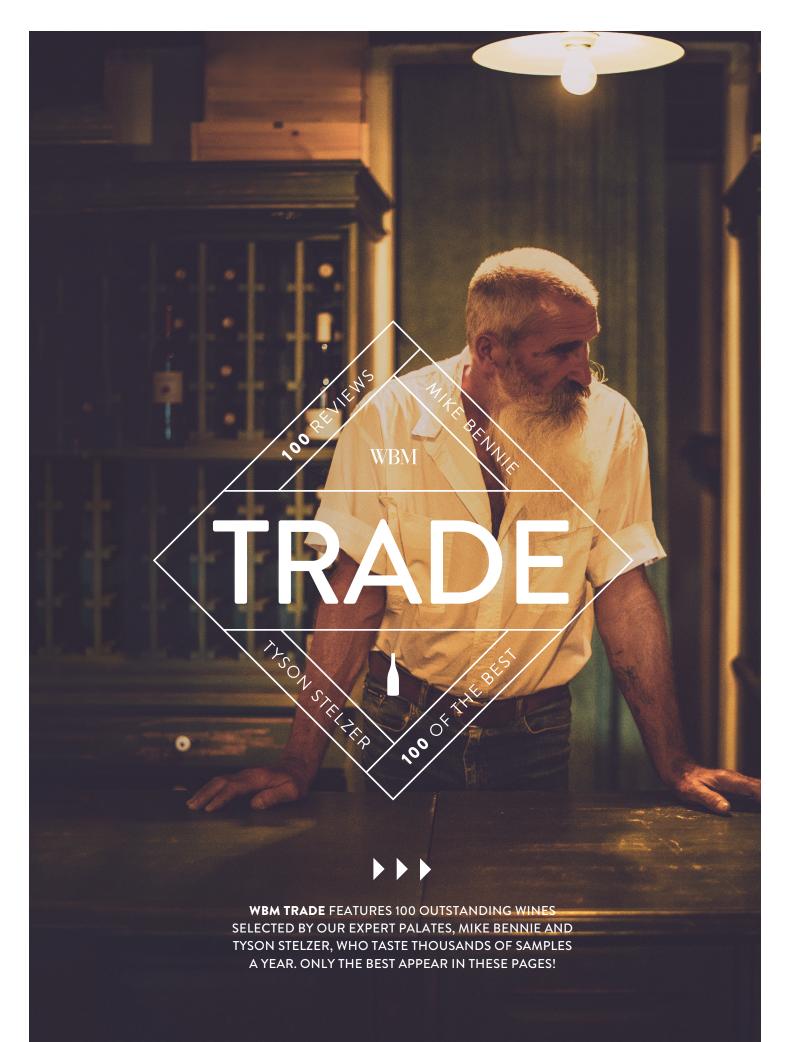
To keep improving their wines, they even run an International Winemakers Challenge where overseas winemakers come and make a vintage of wine at one of the participating wineries. This is quite an affair, with 40 to 50 winemakers (that's about one overseas winemaker for every two wineries in the region) from around 16 countries participating, including recently, Australian winemaker Tony Kalleske.

It would seem to me that the area is a smidge too cool to produce consistently good Bordeauxstyle wines, which has been the main focus thus far. The region will need to experiment with other red varieties rather than rely mainly on Cabernet Sauvignon. For example, they have already shown that Carménère (under their Cabernet Gernischt name) has great potential with its bright, fresh, juicy red fruit flavours, herbaceousness and gentler tannins. Other varieties that have just started proving their potential are Marselan and Cabernet Franc, which has been in some cases miss-planted as Cabernet Gernischt. There are other reds such as Shiraz and Saperavi that could also play a role in the evolution of this region and maybe even some of the lighter-style red varieties from Austria could do well there.

Whether wine drinkers come to know Ningxia as a world-renowned winemaking region or not will depend on the region's ability to shake off the tradition of French varieties; on trying out better suited varieties and also, ongoing research and experimentation with viticulture in such a harsh environment. The potential is there. Let us see where they are at in 10 years. We may well be enjoying Chinese (Ningxia) wine in our local Chinese restaurant by then.

DAN TRAUCKI is a wine journalist and a wine industry consultant specialising in assisting with exports to Asian markets.

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KAY BROTHERS AMERY

McLaren Vale 2016 Block 6 Shiraz

The front label boldly declares, "Handpicked from 124 year old vines", a teaser to the seamless complexity and effortless confidence of this lauded label. 2016 goes down among my favourites yet, for its calm juxtaposition of reverberating depth of satsuma plum and black cherry fruits and exotic spice and its finely poised structure of firm, finely textured tannins and gliding persistence. 14.0% Reviewed by Tyson Stelzer

96 -----\$80.00



----- 97 \$145.00

MOUNT MARY Yarra Valley 2015 Quintet

The fragrance, lift and precision on display here are other-worldly, with the most gorgeous aromas of rose petal, redcurrant and nuances of cedar. Its fragrance hovers all the way through the palate, providing a haunting, airy lift to impeccably elegant red fruits, super fine yet confident tannins and wonderfully bright acidity. The Yarra at its very finest. 13.3%

Reviewed by Tyson Stelzer



96 \$115.00

GIACONDA

Beechworth 2016 Chardonnay

The inimitable Giaconda contrast of succulent, powerful exuberance and the jubilant dynamism of gunpowder aromas makes for an enticing juxtaposition. Juicy white peach and fig of grand proportions are bathed in spice, impeccably honed by cool Beechworth acidity, drawing out a long and fleshy finish. 13.5%

Reviewed by Tyson Stelzer



.---. **96** \$85.00

XANADU

Reserve 2016 Margaret River Chardonnay

All the personality and power of the best parcels of Gin Gin clone on Xanadu's original Lagan vineyard are energised by the tension and energy of carefully timed picking and malic acidity. The result is a Margaret River Chardonnay of the most exacting lime and lemon juice focus, propelling great intensity with effortless energy. Patience. 13.0%

Reviewed by Tyson Stelzer



\$65.00

CHAPEL HILL

Gorge Block 2016 McLaren Vale Cabernet Sauvignon

A serious expression of Cabernet with brooding plum and cassis fruit character, bay leaf and salt bush herbal notes and a whiff of cedary wood lending complexity. Bouquet and palate are a good double act, and the svelte nature of the wine, and concentration, is mighty appealing. 14.5%

Reviewed by Mike Bennie



94 \$40.00

SAMUEL'S GORGE

McLaren Vale 2016 Grenache

A wonderful, fragrant, fuller expression of Grenache, rich in sweet spices and exotic berry fruit character. It pours over the palate in a generous sluice of flavour, stains the mouth a little and exits on a waft of clove-cinnamon and jelly fruits. It's a lush, lovely thing to drink. 14.5%

Reviewed by Mike Bennie



\$30.00

YANGARRA ESTATE VINEYARD

McLaren Vale 2016 Vineyard Shiraz

Mellow, succulent Shiraz of concentrated redspectrum fruit personality but with fine detail in clove spice, undergrowth 'autumnal characters' and a dash of exotic pepper. It's moreish straight up, but also displays an uncommon balance and sense of elegance. It's hard not to immediately see the class here. 14.5%

Reviewed by Mike Bennie





CRITTENDEN ESTATE

The Zumma 2016 Mornington Peninsula Chardonnay

A character-filled Chardonnay showing a mesh of pure, refreshing fruit character, saline-mineral notes, faint savoury nuttiness and a thrilling drive across the palate. Indeed, you'd say 'energy' in the same breath as 'complex' and 'delicious' here. Powerhouse display of Chardonnay's potential, and yet restrained in a way. Kudos. 13.4% Reviewed by Mike Bennie



93 \$85.00



A freshly-named wine that switches out for the Nebuchadnezzar label, but still delivering the bold, deep, rich red expected from Grant Burge. Shows earthy, red berry Shiraz character swirled through forest berry, green herb and minty Cabernet, with a plushness through the palate. Lots of concentration, but plenty of balance in tow. 14.0%

Reviewed by Mike Bennie



93 \$30.00

KANGARILLA ROAD WINERY McLaren Vale 2015 Primitivo

Has all the liquorice, dark chocolate and plummy fruit characters expected from the variety, but what is unexpected is the light herbal note that distinguishes the wine. So too, there's a freshness of acidity that relieves the palate from the full force of fruitiness, elevating the quality of the wine. Generous done well. 14.5%

Reviewed by Mike Bennie



93 \$39.00

MOUNT HORROCKS Clare Valley 2016 Nero d'Avola

Has this lovely sweet cherry perfume, almost maraschino, but there's whiffs of pepper and faint mint in the mix. The palate is soft, just on medium weight, bright in red berry flavours once more and show a little extra crunch to tannin and acidity than expected. Easy drinking, plenty of interest, nicely done. 14.0%

Reviewed by Mike Bennie



PETER LEHMANN

Barossa Valley 2013 Stonewell Shiraz

Stonewell presents Barossa presence with enduring structure, and 2013 exemplifies its black fruit body and gamey, northern Barossa personality. Firm, fine, dry tannins rise to the challenge, propelled by 15 months in French oak. Patience. 14.5% Reviewed by Tyson Stelzer

95 -----\$100.00





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SKILLOGALEE

Trevarrick 2015 Clare Valley Riesling

The highest contour of the lofty Skillogalee vineyard has energised a Riesling of profound character and concentration. Deep and powerful exotic flamboyance of apricot, persimmon and mixed spice suggest the alluring complexity of a touch of botrytis, while an enduring core of preserved lemon and lime ensures exacting focus and determination. Acidity is neatly folded into a finish of grand persistence and multi-dextrous food pairing versatility. 13.5% Reviewed by Tyson Stelzer

95 -----\$50.00



93 \$50.00

MR RIGGS WINE CO.

McLaren Vale 2015 Vintage Shiraz

Generous Shiraz of inimitable McLaren Vale ripe, raspberry and earthy spice character with a hint of regional salt bush/sea spray character. The palate and bouquet are neatly matched, the fuller weight and layers of spicy oak done well to season the wine. Hearty red here, with all things in near equal measure. 14.5%

Reviewed by Mike Bennie



92 \$30.00

ARTWINE

The Real Thing 2018 Adelaide Hills Albariño

Light and fresh, this is a pristine white of crunchy acidity, floral perfume, faint celery-kohlrabi characters and a general zestiness that speaks fluently of summer drinking. It's not overly complex, but there is some fine detail here and it rates high on the drinkability scale. 12.5%

Reviewed by Mike Bennie



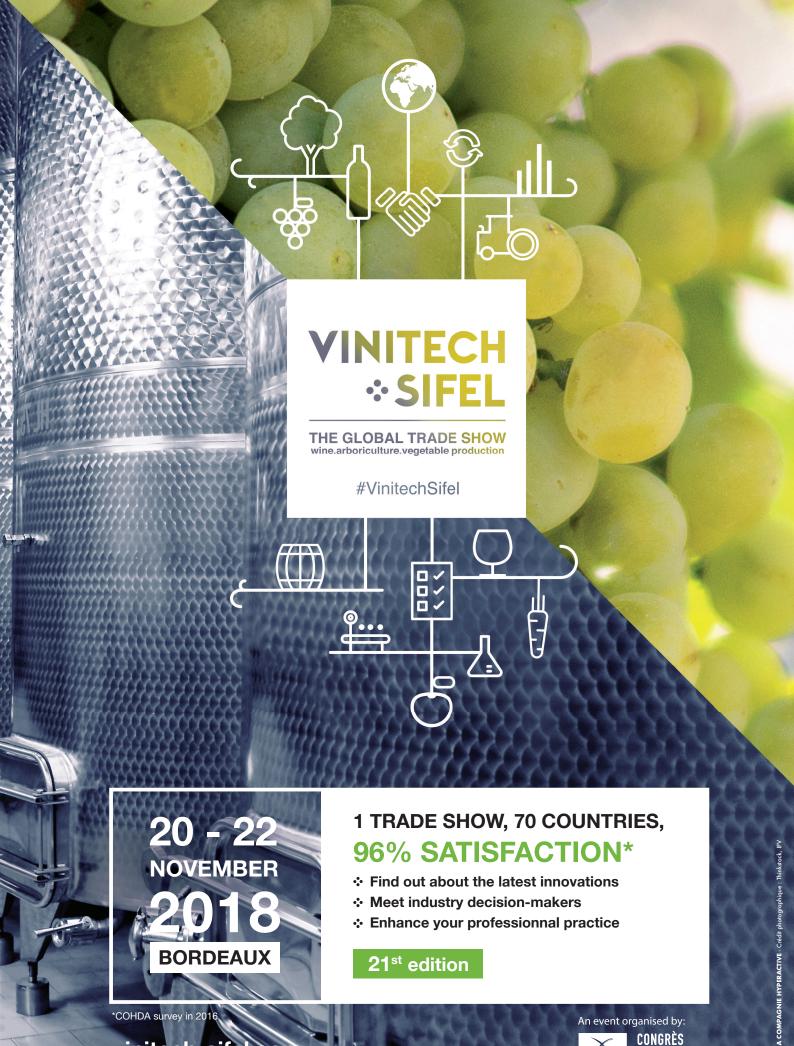
92 \$20.00

LANGMEIL

Three Gardens 2016 Barossa Valley SMG

A sweeter, softer red of easy drinking, supple tannins, good length and a general slurpability, this isn't the most complex wine going around but it does deliver a joyous hit of Barossa red for easy drinking. A mesh of forest berry fruits, cinnamon spice and choc-cherry things is the message. 14.5%

Reviewed by Mike Bennie



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From The Valley Floor 2016 McLaren Vale Shiraz

Deep, dark Shiraz of ripe plum, raspberry and nougat characters, lush and rolling, plush and come-hither in its nature. There's good concentration but balancing freshness, fine tannin profile and length that exceeds expectation. Satisfying for the bucks. 14.5%

Reviewed by Mike Bennie



\$27.00

PARACOMBE

Adelaide Hills 2013 Cabernet Franc

The age of the wine might surprise some drinkers as the lift of green herb, and general sense of freshness feels inherent. Plum and dark cherry fruit characters tussle with green olive and faint mintiness. It feels easy to drink and very well resolved in all its elements. Dig in. 14.0%

Reviewed by Mike Bennie



\$18.00

PATRITTI

Adelaide Hills 2017 Vermentino

Crisp and crunchy Vermentino showing lemon in tonic water scents and flavours, though that seems too simple an explanation of the wine. It's high in refreshment factor, shows a sense of general 'mineral' character, feels arrow-shaped and tight as it courses across the palate. It's a good example of potental of the variety. 12.5%

Reviewed by Mike Bennie

CHAMBERS Rare Muscat NV (375mL)

From a solera dating from 1890, Chambers takes age, complexity and viscosity to new heights in Rutherglen, and this bottle is their ultimate performance. It's loaded with every detail of ancient complexity that could be fathomed, yet it achieves this with astonishing balance, vivacity and poise. Unimaginable complexity, unmitigated persistence and jubilant appeal. 18.0% TS

100 -----\$250.00

SEPPELTSFIELD Para Centenary 1918 (100mL)

In sheer concentration and complexity, Para Centenary is impossible to compare with anything else and futile to describe in mere mortal allusion. 1918 represents a deeply spicy vintage of dry, savoury intrigue that holds for minutes on the palate. An experience everyone deserves at least once. 21.6% TS

99 -----\$700.00

CLONAKILLA

Canberra 2016 T&L Vineyard Block One

Bottled solo for the first time, this is one of the more fragrant, spicy and red fruited components of Clonakilla Shiraz Viognier, and its precision is something to behold. Texturally it's a marvel, with finely structured tannins that tap its granitic soils and yet project silkiness and seamlessness. Singly one of the greatest wines to emerge from one of the finest estates in the country. 14.0% TS

98 -----\$108.00

PENFOLDS Penfolds Lot 1990 Pot Distilled Single Batch Brandy

A wonderfully evocative and complex brandy that seamlessly and masterfully morphs the magnificence of a remarkable old brandy with the complexity of a hint of Great Grandfather and a tweak of young oak. In sheer poise and length it's an incredible achievement, beautifully silky in its smoothness. 42.0% TS

98 -----\$425.00

WANTIRNA ESTATE Yarra Valley 2015 Amelia Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot

Disarmingly youthful and vibrant at more than three years of age, this is a Wantirna set to go down among the longest-lived and most celebrated of all. Its vibrant purple hue heralds youthful fragrance of rose petals and violets, circling a compact core of dense blackcurrant and cassis. Density meets elegance in a very long finish of super fine, enduring tannins. 13.5% TS

97 -----\$70.00

BINDI Macedon 2017 Original Vineyard Pinot Noir

Bindi's original 1988 vineyard has delivered an enticingly alluring and complex Pinot Noir of fragrant delicacy and delicious fruit purity. It's laced with red cherries and strawberries, overlaid with gorgeous rose hip and potpourri. It's unashamedly medium-bodied in all of the very best ways, woven together with a silver thread of acidity and silky, effortless tannins. 13.0% TS

96 -----\$95.00

CHAPEL HILL

House Block 2016 McLaren Vale Shiraz

A beautifully pure McLaren Vale Shiraz that delivers all the glossy black fruits that we love, intricately set against a backdrop of finely integrated tannins. The finish takes it all to another level, showcasing the wizardry of Michael Fragos and his team in achieving depth and magnitude while upholding fruit vibrancy and violet fragrance. 14.5% TS

96 -----\$65.00

CLONAKILLA Canberra 2016 Syrah

With no whole bunch and obviously no Viognier, this is a totally different shape and style to Clonakilla's lauded Shiraz Viognier. Wonderful precision of red and black fruits are layered in exotic spice and pepper. It lingers very long with beautifully textured, finely ground, gravelly tannins, creamy fruit texture and great allure, culminating in a long and characterful finish, with subtle nuances of game and spice. TS

96 -----\$100.00

CLONAKILLA Canberra 2017 Shiraz Viognier

A gloriously fragrant and elegant Clonakilla is the blessing of a classic cool year, brimming with rose petal and pot pourri. A delightful core of morello cherry and wild strawberry fruit glides seamlessly through a lingering trail of powder-fine tannins. It's set to go down as a particularly

long-lived benchmark. 13.5% TS

96 ------\$100.00

DUTSCHKE 2015 Single Barrel St Jakobi Vineyard Block 75 Shiraz Pressings

Wayne Dutschke's Shiraz pressings take his estate to an all new level this year and – crucially – not only in depth of black fruits and sheer presence but also in mouth-filling, silky tannin texture, unnerving persistence and vibrant, floragrant, floral lift. The result is captivating like nothing I've yet experienced from this wonderful estate. Just 400 bottles. Join the queue. 14.5% TS

96 ------ \$130.00

HENSCHKE Hill of Grace 2013

There is a calm, effortless, unassuming confidence to Hill of Grace, as the stamina of its more than 150 years in the soil transcends the vagaries of the seasons. 2013 is magnificently polished, as layers of signature exotic spice weave seamlessly with glossy black cherry and succulent satsuma plum fruit, supported gently by fine, silky tannins. This is a vintage ready to entice from the outset. 14.5% TS

96 ------\$825.00

LEEUWIN ESTATE Margaret River 2015 Art Series Margaret River Chardonnay

Art Series delivers Australian Chardonnay at a level of magnitude all of its own, with fruit and oak rising to lofty heights, yet it does so with tension, definition and sheer acid drive to match, spiralling into an epic finish of uncompromising focus. 2015 is one of the greats, with a long life before it. 14.0% TS

96 ------\$104.00

POOLEY Tasmania 2017 Cooinda Vineyard Chardonnay

Cooinda Vale is one of the legendary sites of the Coal River Valley, until recently a component of Penfolds Yattarna. Anna Pooley has crafted a single vineyard expression that intricately contrasts high-energy southern Tasmanian focus with presence and intensity of grand dimensions. An instant induction among Tasmania's greatest Chardonnays. 13.5% TS

TIM ADAMS

Clare Valley 2011 Reserve Riesling

Capturing the cool energy of 2011, while tactically side-stepping the wet of the latter part of the season, Tim Adams delivers a marvellous juxtaposition of tense lime and lemon and the buttered toast and mixed spice of maturity. Definition and precision are upheld on a finish of impeccable focus, grand persistence and magnificent concentration. Still coiled and exciting, it has many years before it yet. 10.5% TS

96 -----\$29.00

BEST'S GREAT WESTERN 2016 Bin No 0 Shiraz

A vintage of depth and presence for Bin 0, this is a wine laden with enticing satsuma plum and black cherry fruit, nuanced with an air of exotic spice. Its succulence and gloss are magnificent, while ever upholding the savoury restraint and bright signature of Great Western. Fine, silky tannins are intricately integrated and promise medium-term potential. 14.5% TS

95 ------\$85.00

CLONAKILLA

Canberra 2016 Western Vineyard

100 percent whole bunch makes for a tense, spicy, smoky style, heightening its white pepper and firm, superfine tannin structure, amplified by 100 percent new oak. Oak and whole bunch dominate the fruit at this young age, but give them time to meld into the wine and there are exciting things in store. It carries its core of spicy, peppery Shiraz Viognier with great persistence. 13.5% TS

95 ------\$108.00

DUTSCHKE Barossa Valley 2015 St Jakobi Single Vineyard Shiraz

2015 was a record early vintage in the Barossa (and the fastest to finish!) and Wayne Dutschke made the gamble to be the first to pick. He nailed it, and the evidence is the bright lift, fruit definition and acid drive that define one of his greatest St Jakobis yet. Black fruit depth lingers very long amidst firm, finely crafted tannin structure that promises great longevity. 14.5% TS

95 ------\$42.00

DUTSCHKE Barossa Valley 2015 Oscar Semmler St Jakobi Vineyard Shiraz

Wayne Dutschke's dexterity in uniting the depth of Barossa Shiraz with brightness, liveliness and definition is something to behold. 2015 exemplifies this balance, coalescing black and red fruits with dark chocolate oak and finely integrated tannins. The vibrant acidity of the earliest harvest ever freshens a long finish. 14.5% TS

95 -----\$70.00

FREYCINET VINEYARD Tasmania 2016 Pinot Noir

I have long adored the inimitable white pepper character of Tasmania's first east coast vineyard, and its harmony with black cherry depth and mediumbodied restraint. No vintage delivers this as magnificently as 2016, a season of heightened definition, exacting precision, amplified tannin presence, elongated persistence and extended longevity. One of greatest wines I can recall from this benchmark Tassie estate. 13.5% TS

95 -----\$65.00

KOOYONG

Faultline Single Vineyard Selection 2016 Mornington Peninsula Chardonnay

A Faultline of precision and tension, rejoicing in the struck flint and gun smoke exuberance of reductive fermentation and upholding the beautiful white peach and lemon of impeccably tended Mornington Chardonnay. Focused acid line and fine-ground mineral texture bring energy and determination to a finish of lingering fruit presence. 13.0% TS

95 -----\$60.00





CHAPELHILL

GORGE BLOCK
CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2016

MCLAREN VALE

MAJELLA Coonawarra 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon

Majella has long been one of my favourite Coonawarra go-tos and vintages like 2016 exemplify why. Dense, luscious blackcurrant and cassis fruit is bathed in glossy allure, fine, confident tannins, tangy acidity and a touch of regional menthol. The synergy is enticing from the outset, and it will age, too. 14.5% TS

95 ------\$35.00

MOSS WOOD Margaret River 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon

2015 represents is a coiled, tangy and structured vintage for Moss Wood, built around a core of crunchy redcurrant and green capsicum fruit, framed in a brittle wall of firm, fine tannins. It carries long with poise and persistence, guaranteeing an enduring future in the cellar. 14.0% TS

95 --------- \$125.00

PARINGA ESTATE Mornington Peninsula 2015 The Paringa Shiraz

In fragrant allure, deep-set texture and sheer allure, this is definitive cool climate Shiraz with more in common with style of the Northern Rhône than its Australian peers. White pepper and charcuterie unite seamlessly over black cherry and satsuma plum fruit, underlined eloquently by finely textured tannins, finishing glossy and endearing. 14.0% TS

95 --------- \$80.00

S.C. PANNELL Koomilya DC Block 2015 McLaren Vale Shiraz

The exotic spice and soft black fruits of 80-year-old Shiraz vines bore deep into 520 million year old geology, defining a fine, mineral tannin texture unique to this famous little pocket of McLaren Vale. This provides definition and poise to its black fruit depth, carrying a long and seamless finish. 14.0% TS

95 -----\$95.00

TAPANAPPA Adelaide Hills 2017 Tiers Vineyard Piccadilly Valley Chardonnay

Tiers delivers Chardonnay of main course dimensions, brimming with fleshy white peach, nectarine and fig, underscored by supportive, toasty oak and nuances of charcuterie. This is a powerful vintage of breadth and magnitude, intricately tuned by energetic Adelaide Hills acidity that draws the finish out exceedingly long, full and focused. 13.0% TS

95 ------ \$79.00

WIRRA WIRRA The Angelus 2015 McLaren Vale Cabernet Sauvignon

McLaren Vale has long exceeded its reputation for Cabernet Sauvignon and here's a new take on this exciting style: evidence that elegance can be achieved at the top end, and resoundingly well. You have to taste it to believe that it is truly medium-bodied, fragrant, redfruited and bright, showing astonishing youthfulness at three years of age, and set to age very long indeed. 13.5% TS

95 ------ \$70.00

WOODS CRAMPTON Woods Crampton Phillip Patrick Single Vineyard Shiraz 2015

A tour de force of Barossa Valley Shiraz, showing very deep concentration yet an inherent freshness despite the groaning power and weight of the wine. It's assertive in perfume, too, all dark berries and ripe plum, marzipan, walnut husk and espresso characters chiming in. The suppleness and velvety texture are the final hook. Stellar example. 14.7% MB

95 ------\$125.00

YABBY LAKE VINEYARD Mornington Peninsula 2017 Single Vineyard Pinot Noir

2017 marked an elegantly fragrant and alluring harvest for Yabby Lake, creating a gentle and approachable Pinot of immediate allure and succulent poise. Rose petal and red cherry fruit of pretty, understated confidence lingers long amidst silky, fine tannins. 13.0% TS

95 ----- \$64.00

YERINGBERG Yarra Valley 2016

A beautifully enticing Bordeaux blend that unites the fragrant, medium-bodied restraint of the Yarra with the depth and structure of an enduring and historic style. Rose hip aromas provide lift to crunchy redcurrant fruit, underlined by supportive, cedary French oak and confident, fine-grained tannins. 14.0% TS

95 --------- \$75.00

BALGOWNIE ESTATE Bendigo 2015 Center Block Shiraz

A magnificent example of Victorian Shiraz, showing hallmark white pepper, bramble and red berry fruit spectrum scents and flavours, set to a more concentrated palate weight but not without a lift and tannin profile that helps reset the palate. It's a complex, wonderfully expressive wine, and best seen in a decade for best drinking. 14.5% MB

94 -----\$65.00

BASS PHILLIP Gippsland 2016 Premium Pinot Noir

Phillip Jones crafts characterful Pinots of texture and savoury complexity, and his latest Premium exemplifies his style. Naturally slightly cloudy, what it lacks in fragrance it accounts for in fine, silky, creamy tannin texture, fleshy red cherry fruits and subtle anise and cedar spice. 13.2% TS

94 ----- \$220.00

BLUE PYRENEES ESTATE Richardson Reserve 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon

Medium bodied Cabernet of concentration yet restraint, it's a fragrant wine, shaped by fine, grainy tannins and shows judicious winemaking overlay of oak seasoning. Redolent of blueberries, pepper, gum leaf and cedar, while the palate shows cassis, green herb, clove spice. Long, fine, elegant. 13.5% MB

94 -----\$120.00

CURLY FLAT

Macedon Ranges 2016 Chardonnay

A beautifully pure, precise and crystalline expression of the Macedon Ranges, the earliest harvest in history has done nothing to disrupt its clean, vibrant purity, cut with lime and lemon juice and almost ripe white peach. Retention of the majority of malic acidity makes for a racy finish of ground glass minerality and long, focused, zesty persistence. 13.6% TS

94			
\$46	5 O	\cap	

ELDERTON WINES Neil Ashmead 2016 Grand Tourer Barossa Valley Shiraz

Big, bold red of rich plum, dried fruit and sweet spice characters, with bouquet and palate near identical in character and almighty volume. Despite the muscular heft, the wine finds a neat balance, and the rolling wave of lush flavour is quite the addictive thing. Gold stars. 14.5% MB

94	
\$60.00	

PIKES

The EWP2015 Clare Valley Shiraz

Assertive Shiraz of ripe, red berries, vanilla and clove oak characters, ribbons of supple yet faintly chewy tannins – has it all for Clare Valley red. Balance is key, and done very well here, though you'd say that this is definitely in the bigger, fuller flavour zone. Warming, lush red of style is the result. 14.0% MB

94			 	
\$70) ()()		

SEPPELT St Peter's Exceptional Vineyard 2016 Grampians Shiraz

This is a dense St Peter's of power contrasting with focus, driven by confident tannins of finely textured, graphite-mineral structure, true to the Grampians. Clever drying of the stalks has infused the texture and complexity of whole bunch fermentation without stalkiness. A wine of great length and line, an impressive result for a warm and dry vintage. 14.5% TS

94 -----\$80.00

D'ARENBERG The Dead Arm 2015 McLaren Vale Shiraz

This release of Dead Arm was surprising for its more medium weight, tannin-driven styling, a far cry from the fuller-figured, potent releases of recent past. An excellent wine for its concentration and intensity, but the retsraint is where the excitement is. Importantly, it feels like one for very long term cellaring, 14.4% MB

94 -		
\$70.	00	

GLAETZER WINES Anaperenna Unfiltered 2016 Barossa Valley Shiraz

Cabernet Sauvginon
A wine of very deep concentration, slick tannins, sweet-ripe fruit with exceptional balance and character. Hearty as it may be, the wine finds a level of vitality despite the pulsing, muscular style. It's a siren song to those who love the bold styles of Barossa. 15.5% MB

94 ------\$52.00

PRIMO ESTATE Joseph 2016 Clarendon Nebbiolo

At the heftier end of the spectrum but all stacks up.
Opens with char and wood spice, black cherry fruit characters and a whiff of undergrowth, while the palate delivers a slow groove of dark cherry, sarsaparilla and lavish cedar-oak character.
Tannins are a feature and a forte. A bold release, 13.5% MB

94 ----- \$90.00

ST HALLETT Old Block 2014 Barossa Valley Shiraz

Old Block is the culmination of St Hallett's finest old vine sites across the wide diversity of the Barossa. With old vines taking the rain events of 2014 in their stride, Old Block represents a standout of the season. Barossa Valley (almost two-thirds) provides depth of blackberry and blueberry fruit, while Eden Valley lends lift and layers of exotic spice. The result is bright, long, and ageworthy. 14.4% TS

94 ------\$100.00

DUTSCHKE Barossa Valley 2015 Sami St Jakobi Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

2015 is a vintage that unites detail and fragrance with structure and endurance, capturing the varietal hallmarks of Cabernet that we love, structured with a high-tensile frame that beckons a long life in the cellar. Nothing of the fleshy presence and allure of the Barossa is lost along the way. 14.5% TS

94 ------ \$35.00

HUNTINGTON ESTATE Basket Dried 2015 Mudgee Shiraz

One of the more powerful reds you will encounter in your drinking world, this is as deep, dark and brooding as Shiraz gets with ripe, forest berry fruit, fig and date sweet-savouriness, lavish walnut husk and cedar detail. The palate is thick, firm, full and so very concentrated. The impact here is real, and good. 15.0% MB

94 -----\$75.00

ROSILY VINEYARD Margaret River 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve

Medium weight, fragrant and succulent, this Cabernet has quite the mojo. Opens with blueberry and bay leaf scents, switches to darker fruit and cassis in the palate, but it's the shape and precision with which it hits the mouth that makes it soar. Svelte, long, fine, understated. Very good. 14.0% MB

94 -----\$55.00

USHER TINKLER WINES Hunter Valley 2016 Reserve Shiraz

It's at the more powerful end of the Hunter Shiraz spectrum but the balance is impeccable, the red fruit characters strong, the sweet earthiness and briary spice detailed and charming. Tannins are a feature, Italianate (almost) and the wine's freshness is notable. Serious Shiraz and seriously elegant. 14.0% MB

94 ----- \$65.00





WYNNS COONAWARRA ESTATE Black Label 2016 Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon

Classic Black Label and signature Coonawarra Cabernet, the 61st vintage of this legendary cellaring special is layered with blackcurrant and blackberry fruit, underlined by cedary oak, bright acidity and firm, fine tannins that linger long. As reliable and ageworthy as ever. 13.8% TS

94 ------ \$45.00

WYNNS COONAWARRA ESTATE John Riddoch 2015 Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon

A firm and bold vintage for John Riddoch, this is a release built around savoury structure of firm, blocky tannins and savoury oak presence. As ever, this is a label built for the long haul, and this vintage will especially appreciate the calming influence of time. 13.4% TS

94 ------\$150.00 **ASHTON HILLS**

Adelaide Hills 2016 Estate Pinot Noir

The child of an early, fast vintage, this is an Ashton Hills that upholds its poise within a riper style, layered with signature savoury allure of beetroot, fleshy ripe berry fruits and accented with a hint of dark chocolate oak. It concludes with fine, silky tannins and alcohol that contributes warmth without dryness or heat. 14.5% TS

93 -----\$50.00

BEECHWORTH WINE ESTATES
2016 Beechworth Chardonnay

Flush with fresh cut stone fruit flavours, faint vanilla creaminess, a saline tang of acidity and general freshness, this is a multi-layered Chardonnay of good intensity, vitality and drive, with complexity thrown in to boot. It tastes delicious, is the message, but there's more than meets the eye. 13.3% MB

93 ----- \$35.00

CAPE GRACE
Cape Grace 2016 Margaret River
Cabernet Franc Basket Pressed

A more serious rendition of Cabernet Franc showing tension, shape and serious length. It kicks off the experience with boysenberry and leafy, green scents, and segues to a palate with similar, but inky, rich dark berry fruit characters lifted with the peppery-herbal detail. Take time with this. 13.6% MB

93 ----- \$40.00

CURLY FLAT Macedon Ranges 2015 The Curly Pinot Noir

From a single block planted in 1992, the effect of 100 percent whole bunch and 100 percent new oak makes for a complex style of bricking colour, smoky, sappy and brimming with pot pourri. Length and purity are impressive but it screams out for time for sappy stalk texture and firm oak tannins to settle in. 14.1% TS

93 -----\$66.00

GAELIC CEMETERY VINEYARD Premium 2013 Clare Valley Shiraz

A muscular Shiraz of serious proportion but excellent balance... you can't ask for much more. It's redolent of forest berries, cassis, nougat and sweet spice, with similar flavours in the supple, sumptuous palate. Tannins are soft and drinkability high. This is all done very well. 14.5% MB

93 ----- \$45.00

HAYES FAMILY WINES Winemaker's Selection 2017 Barossa Valley Grenache

Does a lot to hit the pleasure zones of the palate, showing supple, lightly jammy fruit character yet an inherent freshness and uplifting spice. The bouquet is floral, a touch sweet, but wrestled with clove spice and an appealing earthiness. Feels like a fabulous thing to drink, any old time. 14.2% MB

93 ------\$40.00 HERSEY VINEYARD Hills Alive 2016 Adelaide Hills Chardonnay

Cool and refreshing Chardonnay set to a leaner spectrum but not without flavour. It's definitively citrus and apple zone here, but tucked into a flinty, 'mineral-charged' sheath. It drives precise and zesty across the palate, finishing squeaky and tight. Good thing this. 13.0% MB

93 -----\$30.00

HIGHER PLANE Margaret River 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve

A fine-boned Cabernet with quiet intensity, it offers blackcurrant, cassis and salt bush scents while the palate shows plummy but controlled fruit, set among fresh, saline acidity, light-cedary spice and a sheath of feathery yet firm tannins. Nicely done. 14.0% MB

93 -----\$38.00 HOWARD VINEYARD Amos 2016 Adelaide Hills Chardonnay

Medium weight Chardonnay of ripe stone fruit, lemon blossom, a whiff of tropical fruits and faint corn characters. Slips through the palate nicely, feels fresh with fruit flavours but also shows a touch of pineapple ripeness. It's a nice midway point between leaner and fuller styles. 13.5% MB

93 ------\$45.00 JEANNERET Clare Valley 2016 GSM

A full-bodied GSM expression that feels best consumed on cooler nights, it shows choc-berry, mocha and clove spice scents, while the palate is slick with molten chocolate tannins, dark berry fruit flavours and licks of twiggy-cedar character. It rolls through the mouth assertively and takes time to let up. Bold done well. 14.8% MB

93 -----\$22.00

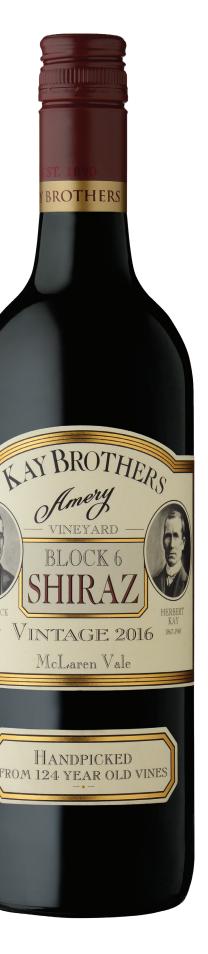


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KARRAWATTA Spartacus 2016 Langhorne Creek Cabernet Sauvigon Malbec Shiraz

This is Cabernet for those seeking oomph and impact from their glass, with the wine showing rich, ripe plummy fruit aromas, espresso oak character, a volume of mixed green herb and brown spice. The palate is a mellow, fleshy flow of deep, dark, inky fruit flavours gently spiked with clovey oak. It's got serious weight and power here, though it all feels righteous. 14.9% MB

93 -----\$92.00

OAKRIDGE

Local Vineyard Series Willowlake Vineyard 2016 Yarra Valley Sauvignon

A very elegant wine from the get-go, this is right up there with premier expressions of the variety in Australia, from anywhere. Light savoury detail and faint chalkiness in texture are the added bonuses, but the freshness inherent from the vibrant fruit is up to task. Complex, detailed, super drinking. 13.5% MB

93 -----\$28.00

PENLEY ESTATE

Hyland 2016 Coonawarra Shiraz

Smooth, supple, rich Shiraz of dark berries, vanilla, cinnamon and a sniff of fig/date. The palate is a lush roll of inky goodness. Shows gently puckering tannins and delivers a hit of spicy oak. Heft but grace. Will cellar well. 14.5% MB

93 -----\$30.00

SCION WINE

Rutherglen 2017 Viognier

Scion seem to have a deft touch with the Viognier variety, finding an attractive middle ground between lean, minerally styles and fruitier, apricot nectar offerings. Somewhere between lies this wine, with good stone fruit scents and flavours, but a talc-like texture to close and cool, mandarin acidity to freshen. Really lovely drinking. 13.3% MB

93 -----\$32.00

Henty 2018 Drumborg Vineyard Riesling

An exotic style of lychee and passionfruit with a rich, viscous mid-palate, contrasting the Tahitian lime tension and talc of the cool Drumborg site, with a fennel seed spice complexity. A Riesling of great character, line and length, with a spicy fruit presence true to the vintage. 11.5% TS

93 -----\$40.00

SOUMAH

Yarra Valley 2017 Chardonnay

Juicy, bright and fresh-feeling Chardonnay. Kicks off with scents of lemon blossom, green apple and ripe stone fruits. Does a similar trick to taste but cut with some brisk, zingy acidity, though it finishes softer than expected. Nicely balanced feel, all up, and drinkability is high. A charm. 13.0% MB

93 -----\$27.00

STEFANO LUBIANA

Tasmania 2016 Sasso Pinot Noir

The best barrels from the best years produce a distinctive expression of Lubiana's biodynamic vineyard, and 2016 takes this to all new heights in depth of colour and spicy complexity. It ripples with dark, spicy berries, backed with finely textured tannins. It's youthful and primary, with medium-term potential. 13.5% TS

93 -----\$120.00

THOMAS

Hunter Valley 2018 Individual Vineyard Braemore Semillon

An approachable and engaging vintage for Braemore, contrasting the lemon and cut grass of Hunter Semillon with the exoticism of fresh mandarin pulp ripeness and even an air of frangipane. It concludes long and full, with neatly integrated acidity effortlessly countering its flamboyance. 11.8% TS

93 -----\$33.00

WILLOW BRIDGE ESTATE Maris Sol 2016 Shiraz Tempranillo Cabernet

A blend that results in a spicy, slurpy red of joyous nature but a little extra structure than expected. Indeed, a rub of tannins, and a smudge to finish, lend some good shape to this cherry colasarsaparilla characterised wine. It's generally just delicious. 14.0% MB

93 -----\$35.00

CAPE MENTELLE Margaret River Trinders 2015 Cabernet Merlot

A refreshingly medium-bodied lunchtime claret, this is a fragrant and spicy blend, brimming with crunchy redcurrant and mulberry fruit. No shortage of depth and presence here, finishing long and focused with cassis-like density, supported by supple tannins. 14.0% TS

92 -----\$31.00

CAPE MENTELLE Margaret River 2015 Wallcliffe Merlot Petit Verdot

An unusual combination - think Cabernet blend without the Cabernet - this is an unashamedly and refreshingly elegant, mediumbodied style of bright redcurrant fruit, leaf, green capsicum and cedar. It contrasts violet fragrance with firm, fine tannins, promising medium-term potential. 13.5% TS

92 -----\$49.00

CLAYMORE WINES Dark Side Of The Moon 2016 Clare Valley Shiraz

Hearty Shiraz of black and red berry fruitiness, swathes of sweet spice, a lift of twiggy-brambly character and a dusting of pepper. It's a lush red of slick tannins and sweet fruits flavours, but the delivery is overwhelmingly in synch for all the varying elements, and it's generally easy to drink. 14.5% MB

92 -----\$25.00

CURLY FLAT Macedon Ranges 2016 Williams Crossing Pinot Noir

Graceful, characterful and affordable, this is a Pinot Noir that unites savoury beetroot complexity with fine-grained tannins and crunchy red cherry, strawberry and blackberry fruits. It's approachable and enticing and will build confidently over the short term. 14.2% TS

92		
\$29	9.00	

GLEN LOFTY Pyrenees 2015 Glen Lofty Shiraz

A really slurpy, soft, generally warm and attractive Shiraz, crying out for something hearty from the oven to go alongside. It starts its argument with dark, forest berry fruit characters with whiffs of nougat. The palate stains the tastebuds with smears of plummy fruit, faint jubey character, sweet spice. Lush, is a good word. 14.5% MB

92			
\$25	5.0	0	

THE LANE VINEYARD Block 8 2017 Adelaide Hills Merlot

Surprising elegance for the price point, and also restraint, this isn't a typical 'plummy merlot' instead finding good shape from dusty tannins and an elevated character from light herbal detail. There's still some plummy fruit in bouquet and palate, so it does anchor you well into the variety. 13.5% MB

92			 -
\$25	5.0	0	

ROCKBARE Tideway 2017 McLaren Vale Shiraz Roussanne

Character plus here - it's a lively red of raspberry/strawberry fruit yet a distinct floral lift, set to just over medium weight and cinched with ropes of succulent tannin, lifted on a sluice of cool acidity. It jumps out of the glass with its volume of perfume and has incredibly silky texture. Fun thing to drink. 14.5% MB

91 -----\$25.00

FERNGROVE WINE CO. Independence 2017 Great Southern Shiraz

A good, juicy slosh of dark berries, sweet spice and choccherry scents and flavours. this is one of those undeniably good-times Shiraz wines that feels easy drinking yet shows a little extra complexity for good measure. Watch out pizza night. 14.1% MB

92	
\$23.00	

HUGH HAMILTON Dark Arts Three Card Monte 2016 McLaren Vale Shiraz Cabernet Montepulciano

An unusual blend but the sum of the parts results in a fun-loving, sloshy red of good, clear, dark plummy fruit character with a distinct belt of chocmint and some fainter clove spice. It's hearty but fresh-feeling, which enables the drinkability. One of those excellent 'mid week styles' that feels vibrant and easy to drink straight up. 14.5% MB

92 -----\$33.00

VINDEN ESTATE

Hunter Valley 2017

Alicante Bouschet

A curious wine for its unusual fruit

personality, but the drinkability

is all there so don't discount that.

Scents of cranberry, maraschino

with flavours not too far off that

trio, but tightened with amaro-

like, tangy acidity. Feels bright,

vivacious and generally very

interesting. 11.0% MB 92 -----\$30.00

cherry, cherry medicine elixir,

FLAMETREE WINES Margaret River 2017 Pinot Rose

Easygoing rosé here set to a drier style, showing loads of raspberry fruit character with dashes of pepper. The palate is more cranberry tang with licks of sweet pomegranate juice, tightly wound and definitively refreshing to drink. It's not reinventing the wheel, but it is done well in its way. 13.0% MB

92
\$25.00

ROBERT STEIN Mudgee 2017 Shiraz Nouveau

expression that sits on a river of crunchy, bright acidity, and generally feels 'floral and fresh' in its youthful way. It's a touch looseknit, but that enables drinkability, and the wine isn't overly complex, but that's missing the point too. The wine's vitality is the great appeal. 13.5% MB

92 -----\$30.00

A vibrant, pure-feeling Shiraz

ZONZO ESTATE Yarra Valley 2015 Shiraz

Great to see these more savoury Shiraz styles from the Yarra Valley. Ópens with game meat and savoury spice characters with red berry fruits the primary feature. There's a medium weight feel to taste, a swirl of briary, brambly detail and light but chewy tannins finish the wine. Pleasurable stuff. 14.5% MB

92	
\$55.00	

FOX CREEK

McLaren Vale 2017 Vermentino

This is a bit of fun, though that is faint praise for a Vermentino that actually shows a little extra character and detail than expected. It shows tonic water, lime, green herb characters, with a touch of general 'mineral character' jostling the fruitier stuff. Very easy to drink. 11.5% MB

92
\$23.00

SEPPELTSFIELD

Barossa Valley 2017 Riesling Refreshing, tightly wound, fragrant, pretty to drink. That's some good box ticking. It's decidedly citrusy, pushing towards that Bickford's Lime Cordial zone, but not as sweet. Indeed, almost sherbetty in acidity and mouth-puckering with its zingy freshness. Lovely stuff from a winery back on song. 12.5% MB

92	
\$25.00	

PAISLEY WINES Turntable Barossa Valley 2017 Grenache Shiraz Mataro

Derek Fitzgerald says he is about the big 'G' and the little 'S' - and his new vintage blend is proof, exemplifying the personality of Grenache. It's a bright and crunchy style of raspberry and strawberry, with a tangy greengage plum vibrancy. Refreshing acidity works in harmony with finely textured tannins. A well crafted blend, great value and a friendly quaffer. 14.5% TS

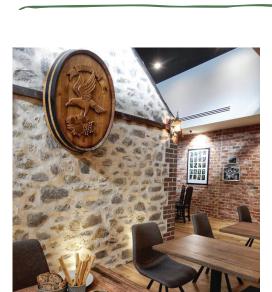
91	
\$2	2.50

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THE END POST



Wolf at home in Hahndorf

The new Wolf Blass Gallery & Museum has opened at Hahndorf in the Adelaide Hills and it looks fantastic and will be a big hit with the local and international tourists who flock to the old German settlement. Wolf, 84, has spent a fortune renovating and extending the beautiful old bank building in the main street and the joint is full of old posters, wines, signs and winemaking equipment. There is even an old cooperage set up; a nice nod to "No wood, no good." Hahndorf is set up for tourists and you can buy everything from puppets, beer steins and leather stubby holders to cuckoo clocks, metre-long hotdogs and alpaca moccasins. It's worth cruising up to Hahndorf for a look. You can't miss the Blass Museum: it has two miniature cannons at the entrance providing not so much a warm welcome as a Wolf one.♦

C1, C2 and a change of C-nery

Keith and Amanda Tulloch from the Hunter Valley dropped in to the Barossa for a drink and dinner with Charlie Melton and family. They discovered that their respective cellar door/hospitality managers were both called Cameron. "By the end of the ninth bottle," says Charlie, "the plan was hatched to swap Cams (C1 and C2) for a few days in cellar door. The idea being that each Cam would bring their own district perspective to each other's customers." Which they did. What a great idea. Done something similar with your staff? Let us know. Email info@madiganmedia.com.au •



Friday on your mind?

We're happy to say that our Friday e-bulletin The Week That Was is still going strong after all these years. We emailed the very first newsletter to our database in September 2006 (and ran out the door expecting a backlash) and things haven't been the same in the wine industry ever since. One of the most common questions we get from people in the wine community is, "I used to get The Week That Was, but haven't seen it for a while. Can you please put me back on the list?" Sure can, but you can easily do it yourself at www.wbmonline.com.au Give us your email address and then sit back and enjoy it. Who writes it? We can't tell you. But he loves U2 and he moves in mysterious ways. •

Booze no longer the only answer

I grew up in a working-class town surrounded by alcohol. The ads on the Rank Arena asked, "Where will you hide your Coolabah?" and men wore "Booze is the only answer" and "Keg Demolition Squad" t-shirts to the local disco. It was a wild Australia back then – even in the cities. I remember going to a Wine Australia event in Sydney when we first launched WBM in 2005. There were plenty of tastings, but no food. No

surprise, then, to see punters throwing up out the front on the way home. Things are changing for the better. Alcohol consumption has hit a 55-year low in Australia. In 2016-17 the total alcohol consumed by people over 15 was the equivalent of 9.4 litres of pure alcohol per person. The ABS said the drop was led by a continued decline in beer intake, with Australians drinking about the same amount of beer as wine. Great news for premium wine producers. •

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