

Australian Newsletter!!!

Pin by thy lugs ye figjams and mollydookers cos I'm stoked to announce some serious true blue grog.

Father Ted (*hunched over picnic basket to conceal what he is doing*): Okay, Father, I'm just getting ready for the picnic.

Accidentally clinks two bottles of wine together as he puts them in the basket.

Father Jack: Drink!

Father Ted: Oh no, Father, it's just sparkling lemonade.

Father Jack (*with a triumphant leer*): Jacob's Creek Chardonnay 1991!

Father Ted: You can tell that just from the sound of the bottles?!

Father Jack: Drink! Drink!

Why Australian Marketing is 4 x better than anyone else

At yet another of those conferences where the audience is harangued for not being globally ambitious the newly appointed head of Fozzies laid out his blueprint for world domination.

"I believe that we need to create a brand that brings Australian wine to life", he said pulling a switch that delivered a current of 30,000 volts into the twitching behemoth that is the Australian wine industry. "We must generate", he continued, flicking another switch, "a real, clear and solid set of messages whatever they may be as opposed to a mythical, cloudy and gaseous stream of innuendo and half-baked nostrums".

"The Asian consumer markets are expanding all the time: from Mongol hordes to Tibetan monks the growth potential is unbelievable. The trouble is these ockers couldn't even point to Australia on a map if they were just being shown a map of Australia.

"The wine blokes on our bloody island need to stop bleating like boomers playing didgeridoos, start behaving like true blues and sell God's own grog flat out like a lizard drinking."

He further rebuked the Australian wine industry: "Things are so crook in Tallarook that your chooks may turn into emus and kick your shithouse door down...You bludgers have got to do some hard yakka until beer o'clock. Our vino should be numero uno in the whole wide. Those Ruskies are one stubbie short of a sixpack if they don't give a xxxx about Brand Oz."

He spreads his arms wide. "My message is simple. Go forth and multiply your sales."

The Empty Continent

You may have noticed an Australian-shaped aching emptiness in the heart of our list.** In fact, Aussie wines would once have stood out like a shag on a rock. This constitutes ambivalence to one of the greatest wine-producing countries. This constitutes ambivalence to one of the greatest wine-producing countries. On the one hand is an industry dominated by massive global corporations making perfectly acceptable bulk wine for the supermarkets.

The provenance of these wines is irrelevant; the price point is king. Then there are the Braggadocio wines, swaggering with bold flavours, flaunting incendiary levels of alcohol. Finally, there are a number of growers who appreciate that the best way of expressing the regional identity of their wines is to work the vines with great understanding and to diminish the number of obtrusive interventions in the winery.

Terroir is not just about the soil but, philosophically speaking, the way the finished wine bears the imprint of the place it came from and the nature of the vintage. Barossa has indeed its individual sense of place and particular style of wine. In Australia, in particular, there is a kind of prevailing determinism whereby winemakers desire correctness and maximise interventions and so manipulate their wine towards a precise profile. Profiling is taking a product of nature and gearing it to what a group of critics thinks or a perception of what consumers might be comfortable drinking. What they call consistency, others might call homogeneity. Besides all sort of chemical interventions it is the use of oak as the final lacquering touch that often tips these wines into sweetened stupefaction. They become so big they are essentially flavour-inert.

Enjoying wine is about tasting the flavours behind the smoke and mirrors, or in this case, beyond the toasty oak and alcohol. It is not that these components are bad per se, just that they are overdone and throw the wine out of balance. The wines of Barossa have natural power and richness; to add more to them is to, in the words of Shakespeare "throw perfume on a violet". Having said that I think there is generally a more judicious approach to oaking in the New World than previously. It's also true to say that we have witnessed the emergence of wines from cooler climate regions in Oz (Morningson, Tasmania, Yarra, Eden and Clare Valley, Great Southern, Adelaide etc, where the winemakers realise that aggressive oaking would mask, if not emasculate, the subtler aspects of the fruit in their wines. This is a positive trend. There is still, however, a tendency to look at super-ripeness as a license to layer on the flavours. A Napa Valley producer once told me proudly that his Chardonnay (14.5%) went through malolactic, lees-stirring and a high proportion of barrique. A transformation from nondescript duckling to ugly swan?

"Coonawarrifying" Wine - The New Terroirism

Although novelty may be as old as the world itself every one in the wine trade is constantly aware of the importance of reinvention and relabelling. Wine, as a business, is less concerned with what goes on inside the bottle and more with the notion of pushing product. The notion of terroir, for example, has been hijacked by many people who wish to give credibility to their product. Producers, regions, even countries are highly conscious of image and the necessity to talk up individuality in a competitive global market. In Australia, for example, there is a move away from the well-trodden, well-marketed varietal path towards the notion of promoting regionalism, the glimmerings of a foundation of an appellation controllée, encouraging quality wines. Each country wishes to establish discrete terroirs, to differentiate between commercial swill and high quality wine, insofar that the region itself, Coonawarra, for instance, due to the particular properties of the soil, is recognised as a denominator of quality, a form of high level branding. Terroir is subtler than this for within a region there is a sub-region, therein a microclimate, a row of vines, some grapes, a grower's personality, a range of vinification options and a singular cuvée of a wine from a particular vintage. Regionality is thus not the whole truth. Take Chablis, a classic example of a wine that does not need to be marketed by its grape variety. Not all wines from Chablis are, however, made in the same way - one *vigneron* may use new oak, another stainless steel, another old oak - and taking into the account the variables imposed by nature, weather conditions, the aspect of the slope, the geological composition of the soil, the yeasts, we can see how a multiplicity of different wines of different styles may derive even from one region. Furthermore, there is a dilution of terroir - just as Chablis widened its remit with the creation of Petit Chablis AOC, so Coonawarra as a region began to encompass land outside the fabled *Terra Rossa* soil. Given how arbitrary this all this it would be useful to discover a form of categorisation that takes into account what the wine actually tastes like. *What thus defines the wine is the accumulation and aggregation of innumerable details; what really defines it further is its taste or,*

more precisely, our taste-response to it. Which leads to the second point: wine needs to be marketed more imaginatively to achieve a truer sense of what is in the bottle. As Jean-Luc Godard observed: "To me style is the outside of content and content the inside of style, like the outside and inside of the human body". We should never lose track that we cannot define the essence of wine any more than we can describe a person, but we can describe its most obvious characteristics and say how it affects us.

Return to Egg

A new exciting wine culture is rearing its head in Australia. Firstly, the viticulturists are realising the importance not only of terroir, but the relationship between the vine, the soil and the climate. Over a hundred estates are wholly, partly or are in conversion to biodynamics. Secondly, although vinification techniques are still largely clumsy and obtrusive, and there seems a huge reliance on manipulations, one senses that winemakers are seeking better balance in their wines. It is, however, the wine bar and restaurant culture that has been most obviously transformed. You may now discover many brilliant wine lists mixing the best of contemporary Europe with the new wave of Australian growers. The way people drink informs the way people think. The dominance of the brands has spawned (although the embryos were always around) a vivid, vibrant counter-culture and we have found growers making wine with spirit, curiosity and a feel for the land.

We are obviously delighted to be working with some of the key players in the Australian natural wine movement: Anton von Klopfer, Tom Shobbrook, James Erskine and Sam Hughes as well as a number of organic and biodynamic estates. The four aforementioned names have grouped together as Natural Selection Theory and found new directions for their energy, humour and experimental verve.

Here is an overview of our estates.

Victoria

- *Tom & Sally Belford, Yarra Glen
- *Timo Mayer, Yarra Valley
- *Luke Lambert, Yarra Valley
- *Julian Castagna, Beechworth
- *Sorrenberg, Beechworth
- *Bespoke Brothers, Heathcote
- *Bindi, Macedon Ranges

South Australia

- *Wangolina Station, Mount Benson
- *Ngeringa Vineyards, Mount Barker
- *Lucy Margaux, Adelaide Hills
- *Domaine Lucci, Adelaide Hills
- *Tom Shobbrook, Adelaide Hills
- *Jauma, James Erskine, Barossa
- *Natural Wine Selection

Tom & Sally Belford, Yarra Glen

Tom's first job at the sharp end of wine was at De Bortoli when made the move over to the wine side, working as Cellar Hand then Cellar Master. In 2006 still on a learning adventure, he went overseas with his young family travelling and working his way through five regions in France in order to satisfy his yearning for more knowledge where he developed a love of cru Beaujolais wines and was inspired by the passion of the French with their love of terroir, the individual craftsmanship and the dedication and personal expression behind each wine. Tom joined Sticks Yarra Valley in October 2008 and this year had released his own wine from bought-in grapes made carbo-style a la Beaujolaise.

Single vineyard Syrah not Shiraz - 100% carbonic maceration, some whole bunches, no sulphur added until just prior to bottling and just a smidge then. It's got a slightly reductive, empyreumatic nose at first, but that blows off and a perfume of bright fruit and spice takes over. The palate is fresh and nervy with good persistence. Think wood-smoke, think tapenade, think balsam, bay and ladle on the cracked black pepper. The real deal.

2010 Bobar Syrah

Timo Mayer, Yarra Valley



Timo Mayer believes that wines are made in the vineyard and therefore tries to interfere as little as possible. Mayer vineyard is perched on the slopes of the improbably named Mount Toolebewong south of Healesville in the heart of Victoria's Yarra Valley.

Timo makes tiny quantities of wine from his 2.2 hectares of vines, which are mainly planted to Pinot Noir, with small amounts of Shiraz and Chardonnay. Timo says he is striving to make wines that are true to the expression of the land and have a point of difference. His winemaking credo is minimal interference and handling, and no filtration. The Close Planted

Pinot comes from one acre of Pinot planted at 75 cm apart, which is double the planting density to the rest of the vineyard. With part of those grapes he does a 100% whole bunch ferment which is then blended back with the destemmed component and makes up a 40% of the total blend. Timo believes the use of stalks gives him a more savoury style. As he says on his website - Bring back the funk!!

The wine shows fragrant whole bunch characters coupled with red fruit, spice and a violet and crushed strawberry character. Medium bodied with spicy creamy red fruits, liquorice and minerally earthy flavours with excellent concentration, clarity and weight. It has fresh acidity and fine lightly stemmy tannins. I think of many Australian Pinots as "Pinot flavoured dry reds", everything is Pinot-shaped, but they fail to achieve lift off. Now and then you come across a Pinot that does everything Pinot (a-hem, Burgundy) should do, it appeals to the head and the heart, gives you goose-bumps and provokes an emotional response. This is such a wine.

Julian Castagna, Beechworth



Having purchased a few acres of grapes, and bought a little bit of fruit, Julian Castagna made his first vintage of wine in 1998 with the help of neighbour Rick Kinzbrunner, of Giaconda. Twelve years on, Castagna has more than arrived. He is thoughtful and thought-provoking, interesting and argumentative, a vigneron's vigneron.

With his son Adam working with him in his tiny winery behind the house, and the farm settled comfortably into its biodynamic routine, Castagna seems focused on fine-tuning his wines while at the same time playing around with the raw materials he has on hand.

Castagna currently produces two levels of wine. The Adam's Rib label, featuring a red blend and a white blend, is run by his son as an odd hybrid between a second label (for slightly lower quality juice) and a separate project altogether. The Castagna line of wines contains a white, a rosé styled after the pink wines of Tavel, and several reds, including a Sparkling Shiraz, which is a style of wine that Castagna adores.

The winemaking at Castagna is pretty much what you would expect from a tiny biodynamic outfit that produces 1800 cases of wine across two labels. Everything is done by hand, with very little electricity. Hand harvesting leads to gentle crushing of whole clusters and some

destemmed grapes. Fermentations take place at their own speed with native yeasts, pressing is done by hand with a basket press, and the wines are never fined or filtered. New oak is generally kept to a minimum.

The results of Castagna's approach truly speak for themselves. The wines range from very good to tremendous, and clearly reflect both the soil and the season in which they are made as well as the vision of the person who has made them. Castagna is clearly making wines of philosophy and of place, and succeeding admirably, even as his wines defy the stereotypes of Australian wine as big, over-oaked, fruit bombs.

The Castagna Vineyard is situated at an altitude of 500 metres five-and-a-half kilometres outside the beautiful town of Beechworth in Northeast Victoria, high in the foothills of the Australian Alps. The soil consists mainly of decomposed granitic-loam on a base of clay. The climate is distinctly Mediterranean with hot days and cool nights during the important part of the growing season. The land is farmed biodynamically; using Rudolf Steiner's biodynamic principles, because Julian believes it is the best way to achieve optimum fruit quality that best expresses its terroir. The vineyard is hand-pruned and the fruit is hand-picked and cropped at a bit less than two tons per acre. The winemaking is very traditional using only the vineyard's indigenous yeast with minimal interference. Elevation varies between 18-20 months using only the very best, tight grain French oak available, about half of which is new each year. The intention is to make, as simply as possible, wine which is an expression of the place where it is grown.

The colour of the Genesis Syrah is dark plum to magenta but yet still somehow transparent. A full-throttle wine of depth and complexity. It smells of cassis and spice with enchanting aromas of cedar, sweet black pepper, freshly dampened earth and vanilla pod – yet restrained. The palate is rich, concentrated, deep – dark and mysterious with fine powdery tannins and a lovely drying extract. A subtle, delicate floral aspect lingers with the finely powdered tannins on the finish. The graphite-like character and the fresh acidity ensures the wine finishes long, dry and spicy, always alive.

Un Segreto (Sangiovese/Shiraz) is deep crimson. The nose is of exotic spice, liquorice and tar over black cherry, cedary wood and earthy extract. The palate has an earthy, black-fruited impact with textural richness coming from the fine tannins. It is taut, fine and long with vibrant acidity. It has a middle pallet which is long, clean, with a savoury finish. Overall it is dry and savoury with lovely earthy elements, deliciously rich, but avoiding sweetness.

“Deep crimson-purple floral and herbal, highly aromatic, blackcurrant and dark plum with ethereal savoury and spice complexity that includes flashes of fennel, leather, black olive, cherry, anise and mint. Savoury and complex medium-full boded blend of 60% Syrah and 40% Sangiovese, the long and structured core of tangy fruit shows similar flavours to the nose, structured by a spine of firm acidity and handsome minerality, spicy roast coffee oak with finely grained but mouth-filling tannins.”

Adam's Rib is a blend of 70% Nebbiolo, 30% Shiraz. Medium garnet in the glass, this wine has a nose of cherry and dried flowers. On the palate it is soft and delicate, with a very nice floral aspect and raspberry and cherry flavours with light tannins that emerge after several mouthfuls. Subtle and elegant.

A recent move at Castagna has been the purchase of two egg-shaped, food-grade concrete tanks, each holding 900 litres. They are, he says, 'the most perfect shape in physics', and in the winery reduce pressure on the lees and deposit the lees over a larger surface area which, he believes, will eliminate the need for battonage. Castagna believes that these vessels will allow him to make eggsemplary wines (I have more where that came from).

2008 Adam's Rib

2008 Un Segreto

2008 Genesis Syrah

Sorrenberg, Barry & Jan Morey, Beechworth



The Morey family has a tradition of winemaking that goes back over 500 years to the Mosel River in Germany. Barry's grandfather, Jacob Barzen, emigrated to Australia to work on a family vineyard and winery at Dookie. This vineyard has since been sold and converted back to grazing land. The name Sorrenberg comes from a small vineyard owned by the Barzen family near a town called Reil on the Mosel.

Sorrenberg is a 2.5 hectare vineyard owned by Barry and Jan Morey and situated on the outskirts of Beechworth, surrounded by forest on two sides and Stony Creek runs across the back boundary. The area was selected for viticulture because of its cool climate and favourable granitic soil. The undulating site provides good drainage and the northern aspect ensures full ripeness is achieved even with the later ripening varieties.

To achieve maximum quality and potential, the vines at Sorrenberg are closely planted on a single fruiting wire. Foliage wires are used to achieve good berry exposure. The vines were planted in 1985 and the first vintage was in 1989. The main varieties are Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Gamay with smaller quantities of Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Semillon and Pinot Noir for the blends. The grapes are processed at the vineyard and traditional methods are used in the wine making process with fermentation being carried out in French barriques. The objective is to produce hand-made wines and small production allows individual attention can be given to each barrel of wine thereby ensuring maximum quality and flavour.

The Gamay is a hybrid of Burgundian and Beaujolais techniques. (There is 10% Pinot Noir used in the blend.) Half of the Gamay is crushed and left to soak for four days before fermentation starts. Of the rest, 20% of the fruit is left whole in the ferment. Fermentation with natural yeast is for two weeks on skins, after which the wine is pressed and matured in oak for eleven months. The bouquet reveals aromatic fruit of redcurrant with a hint of cherry. This follows on to the palate to include complex elegant acid with refined tannin and a full middle palate with a lingering savoury finish.

The Chardonnay is 100% barrel fermented in French oak with 25% new. Fermentation is with natural yeasts and the wine also goes through malo. This wine further receives extended lees contact for ten months with weekly stirring followed by eight months barrel maturation. Minimal handling and filtration ensures maximum flavour is retained. It shows a lifted bouquet of white peach, nectarine with lime overtones. The fruit follows onto the palate including sensible acid and seamless integration of oak. This wine is extremely well balanced showing texture, minerality and a vibrant structure with a long lingering mouthfeel.

2008 Chardonnay

2008 Gamay

Bespoke Brothers, Nick Stock, Heathcote

Nick Stock's supremely elegant Syrah is from the Greenstone vineyard, 400 metres above sea level, on the Mount Camel range. The terroir is volcanic Cambrian subsoil with high calcium content, and red soil with high level of iron oxide.

Harvest is manual and takes place in the early morning. A mixture of whole bunch and some destemmed berries head into the press. Extraction is gentle: grapes are gravity-fed, fermentation is in open vats with small batches with hand plunging and pump overs. The wine spends twelve to thirteen days on the skins and ultimately matured in old barrels for nine months. Only 120 cases are produced.

The Syrah has a complex, vivacious nose with lifted aromatics, red fruits and perfume, typical of a warmer season. Lithe and detailed palate with juicy red fruit flavours, musky through the finish and lovely spice.

2008 Heathcote Syrah

Bindi, Michael Dhillon, Macedon Ranges



Bindi, 50 km north-west of Melbourne in the Macedon Ranges, is the family property of the Dhillon family. Originally purchased in the 1950s as part of the larger grazing farm 'Bundaleer', 'Bindi' is a 170 hectare farm of which 6 hectares are planted to Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Fifteen hectares are dedicated to managed plantation eucalypts for high grade furniture timber whilst the remainder of the land is maintained as remnant bush land and important indigenous grasslands.

The vineyard and winemaking philosophy is to seek balance and purity in the expression of various individual vineyard sites and this philosophy is applied to farming and conservation at 'Bindi'; the preservation of the natural harmony.

The vineyard elevation is 500 metres above sea level and soils are predominantly shattered quartz over siltstone and clay with some eroded volcanic top soil over clay.

The winemaking incorporates high percentages of natural yeast ferments, gently worked ferments, delicate pressing, long lees ageing in French barrels and minimal racking. No fining and restricted filtration regimes are followed. The Composition Chardonnay, grown on a 1.5 hectare plot, is an intense, mineral wine fully ripe but lean, taught and intense with savoury, creamy elements. Fragrant notes of orange blossom, nectarine stone, spice and subtle nuttiness are usual with a vibrant, tight, long palate highlighted by clean acidity, wonderful texture and fine length. The wine is fermented in French barrels of which typically 20% are new and is lees stirred every week over winter and given around one quarter malo-lactic conversion. It is racked around eight months after vintage, and returned to barrel for a further three months before bottling. Quartz Chardonnay is at the upper end of the Chardonnay planting, where the quartz incidence in the soil is the greatest.

The ideal of the Composition Pinot is to produce a delicious, perfumed, spicy harmonious, textured wine that is not as intense, complex nor ageworthy as the individual vineyard wines. This essentially is the declassified fruit or barrels from the single vineyards. The wine is fermented the same way as their other Pinot Noirs in that it is ostensibly 100% de-stemmed and gently worked in small, open vats with most vats being run as un-inoculated ferments. The wine spends 11 months in French barrels, of which about 10-15% are new. The Block Five vineyard is about half of one hectare in size on a sheltered, north facing, and very quartz-riddled site. It has a wonderful natural vineyard exposition. The wine is always darker in fruit expression and immediately more spicy and earthy than the other Pinots from this estate. It is less immediately perfumed and has more tannin and fruit power.

2009 Composition Chardonnay

2009 Quartz Chardonnay

2009 Composition Pinot Noir

2009 Block 5 Pinot Noir

Luke Lambert, Yarra Valley

Luke Lambert is part of a group of young Australian winemakers (including Timo Mayer) in the state of Victoria who share similar philosophies and call themselves "South Pack". They believe in low chemical inputs in the vineyard, hand harvesting, wild yeast ferments, low levels of new oak, moderated alcohols, savoury palate structures and food friendly styles. Most of them have lived and worked in Europe, drink French wines at home and look as much to France and Italy for inspiration as to Australia. His Yarra Valley Syrah has lovely lifted perfumes and is typically elegant, whilst his Heathcote Nebbiolo aims for red fruits and those tea-and-tar aromatics.

2009 Yarra Syrah

2009 Heathcote Nebbiolo

Wangolina Station, Mount Benson



Mount Benson, in the limestone Coast region, is one of the smallest wine regions in Australia with approximately 500 hectares of vineyard. The first commercial vines were only planted in 1989 but it is testament to the unique terroir of the region that this is where Chapoutier first chose to locate their Australian project. The terroir has two main features. Firstly the cooling influence of the Great Southern Ocean, producing cool nights and a long growing season that encourage high natural acidity and fines flavours in both reds and whites. For this reason Mount Benson has been called the “Marlborough of Australia”. Secondly it shares the red terra rossa soil (red sandy loam over limestone) for which nearby Coonawarra is famous for. This free draining iron rich soil produces red wines of finely textured tannins and fresh minerality. The regions marketing slogan is “terra rossa by the sea”. Wangolina Station has been run by the Goode family for four generations producing high quality Merino sheep and Shorthorn cattle on their 1600 acre farm. Winemaker Anita Goode is the fifth generation, and has planted 30 acres to vines. She is helped by winemaking consultant Kym Milne MW. The wines are currently made at a friend’s facility in the Adelaide Hills, but Anita plans to bring the winemaking in-house once their newly constructed winery is finished. The grapes are night picked and transported over-night up to the Adelaide Hills. Anita believes that one unexpected advantage of the journey is the six hours maceration pelliculaire that the Sauvignon Blanc receives en route!

The Sauvignon Blanc shows an intense nose, with top notes of ripe gooseberry with a punchy varietal herbaceous lift accompanied by riper hints of satsuma and tangerine. The palate is light to medium bodied, with a zesty limey acid, some passion fruit, and a clean, refreshing finish. It has 3% Semillon for added palate weight and comes in at just under 12.5 alcohol, and with less than 2 g/l residual sugar, is dryer than many New World examples. Anita carries out an early pick for acid and herbaceous, green fruit notes and a later pick for riper fruit flavours and body. The Cabernet-Shiraz is a deep crimson with vivid magenta hues. The nose is immediately attractive and compelling, with sweet blueberry and mulberry fruit. On the palate there is luscious dark fruits, pepper and spice with a “cookies and cream” character. There are some subtle toasty mocha characters from the use of both French and American oak, with a fresh, natural acidity keeping it honest. The oak is only one fifth new, with one fifth American, the rest French.

2009 Sauvignon

2008 Cabernet-Shiraz

Ngeringa Vineyards, Janet & Erinn Klein, Mount Barker



The Ngeringa Mt Barker Springs vineyard sits at 360 metres above sea level and the Nairne vineyard sits at 420 metres above sea level, both immediately below the summit of Mount Barker in the Adelaide Hills. They are the properties of young winemakers Janet and Erinn Klein. Both vineyards have been biodynamically certified since their first production in 2005. First established in 2001 with one hectare of Pinot, Sangiovese & Nebbiolo, then in 2002 three hectares of Syrah, Chardonnay and Viognier were added with a small planting of Aglianico in 2010. Their vineyard has been treated with organic and biodynamic methods since the start, with Erinn seeking advice and inspiration from leading biodynamic producer Julian Castagna. Janet and Erinn released the first wine under the Ngeringa label in 2007.

With five hectares of vines planted across two vineyard sites (Mt Barker Springs and Nairne), four hectares of olive grove, a small herd of Scottish Highland cattle, sheep, hay pastures, revegetation areas and a veggie garden, the Kleins are well on their way towards achieving the Steiner ideal of a closed farm unit. They also have a posse of chickens, ducks & guinea fowl, who wander amongst the vines eating garden weevil and other vine pests. The Klein's motto is "creating wines with vitality through the simplicity of biodynamics."

2008 Syrah comes from the Nairne vineyard planted with the Tahbilk clone (sourced from the 1860s plantings at Tahbilk in Victoria, and believed to be the original Shiraz clone in Australia) on sedimentary schistous soil with a high mineral content. It is glossy purple, floral and white pepper on the nose, spicy on entry, fleshy tannins with some grip, bright raspberry fruit at the core, darker fruits and liquorice on the finish. Mid weight, a delicate, gentle cool climate style; textural, perfumed, no sweetness, effortless and delicious.

From the Mount Barker Springs vineyard JE Syrah has a cooler, lighter soil than the Nairne vineyard comprising sandy loam topsoil over mixed iron clay and sandstone. Natural wild fermented in small 1-2 tonne batches. No temperature control preferring high ferment temperatures, one week fermentation. The wine spends twelve months in old French oak barrels and is filtered but not fined. It has a fresh, immediately appealing nose of red currants, is light to medium bodied quite sappy and juicy with lots of pithy blackberry compote, but not sweet. 12.5% alcohol, soft, very supple tannins and fine mineral detail provide the structure; lighter than the estate Syrah, but more savoury and in an incredibly drinkable style.

The estate Chardonnay is fermented on the wild yeasts and then sojourns one year in French oak, (10% new oak). Delicate nose, then very immediate on the palate, citrusy with peach,

honeysuckle, orange notes, some cashew and spice, fine boned acid structure and a gentle, perfumed, clean finish. Very attractive.

JAMES HALLIDAY Australian Wine Companion 2011. 96 points. Good colour, a very complex bouquet, with barrel ferment and intense cool-grown fruit in a grapefruit and white peach spectrum; has great length and thrust..

Ngeringa Rosé is one of the complex pink wines made in Australia (without being pretentious). Half the juice is taken from the Syrah fermenters twelve hours or so after destemming (saignée method). The balance is from Syrah fruit especially picked for the rosé and pressed like a white wine (direct press method). Some years a proportion of Sangiovese from saignée is included. The rosé is fermented naturally in old French oak barrels and matured therein for six months. Pale rose petal pink, complex nose, pippy, herbal, floral, jasmine notes; light to medium body, dry, crisp acid, delicate red fruits and white peach with a mineral stoniness; very similar to a serious (Bandol) Provençal style.

2008 Ngeringa Chardonnay

2008 JE Syrah

2008 Ngeringa Syrah

2010 Ngeringa Rosé

Lucy Margaux, Anton Von Klopper, Adelaide Hills



“A path is only a path, and there is no affront, to oneself or to others, in dropping it if that is what your heart tells you. Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. Then ask yourself alone, one question. Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't it is of no use.” (Carlos Castaneda)

In 2002, with wife Sally and daughter Lucy, Anton purchased a 16 acre cherry orchard and began creating their own “Domaine” in the Adelaide Hills. “We aim to produce wines that express themselves. To achieve this at the highest level I would never consider adding yeast, bacteria, acid, sugar or any of the other artificial or natural additives. A winemaker can choose to be an artist or a chemist. I believe that winemaking is a craft; all our decisions are made with the aid of a wine glass and traditional skills, with the aim of developing the wines true identity.”

Anton and family are now part of the Basket Range community and vinify small parcels of fruit from friends' small vineyards that surround this unique part of the Adelaide Hills. Anton continues: “My skills have also increased in the last few years by using the perceptive palate technique and clairsentient thought. More recently this impulse has formed a group of beautiful people that understand natural wine. In regards to this my close family is Sam Hughes, James Erskine, Tom Shobbrook. The four of us form Natural Selection Theory, a wine

movement that is like free flow jazz, outrageous winemaking with no beat of security, only an endeavour to push the boundary of wine beyond its stale present.”

Set in Basket Range, South Australia, a series of hills located west of the city of Adelaide, Lucy Margaux Vineyards is one of a small group of farms surrounded by untouched wilderness. LMV enjoys the mild humid influences of the ocean however; at five hundred metres above sea level the region is cool and grows quality Pinot Noir. Yes, you heard it – in Adelaide Hills. LMV currently has 10 acres of Pinot Noir planted on 4 different aspects. The row spacing is 2.4m and the inter-vine spacing is 1.5m. The vines are cane pruned and the cordon height is 50 cm, which allows the fruit to ripen evenly from the warmth of the earth.

The vineyard is dry grown and 100% biodynamic, which means the land has never seen fertilizer, herbicides, pesticides, fungicides or any other chemical spray. The vines themselves sprawl and straggle, clinging to the side of the steep hills.

Little Creek may show a pretty face but she is a bigger, more sumptuous style of Pinot fed by Adelaide long afternoon sun and this has given her a beautiful strong cigar, liquorish, anise structure to hold to for many years. The single vineyard version is truly hedonistic. Jim's Vineyard (Uraidla Valley) has pure strawberry highlights, whilst Monomeith, from the Ashton Hills and warmed by the nurturing morning sun., has lovely up front rhubarb and sour cherry fruits.

These are free-spirited, individual wines that take you on a journey through the hills to capture the essence of the vineyard; they are not just part of the landscape they are the landscape; drinking them is like listening to music... you have to surrender yourself to appreciate its beauty and wonder.

2010 Wildman Pinot Noir
2010 Lucy Margaux Pinot Noir
2010 Monomeith Pinot Noir
2010 Monomeith Single Vineyard Pinot Noir
2010 Little Creek Vineyard Pinot Noir
2010 Little Creek Single Vineyard Pinot Noir
2010 Jim's Vineyard Pinot Noir

Domaine Lucci, Adelaide Hills, Anton Von Klopper



We begin with the basic (declassified) Pinot which included some whole bunches which gives the wine texture and length with a slight sappy structure. It has a classic Pinot nose of cherries, raspberries, gooseberries and wild flowers. It is full and sumptuous and like all the Basket range wines, it has a distinctive tight structure, a pure wine without the trickery of new oak. Merlot can be jam jamboree or stewed tea, but this version is a truly noble effort and reminds us that when done right Merlot should be big and masculine, but still remain soft and delicate. The wine is more black than red, with intense blood plum flavours and nuances of cinnamon, cardamom and aniseed. The palate is big yet graceful with persisting velvety tannins. *Vino di Casa* is a hearty Rhône blend for everyday drinking. All the usual suspects on the nose, red cherries and mulberries, red liquorice and star anise. The palate showed quite a lot of fruit sweetness, with an engaging meld of plump briary fruits, liquorice and spice. Finished with a touch of white pepper. Juicy fruits and soft tannins, but it has some structure. As for the Pinot Gris on skins... how should I describe the colour. Slightly grey. No. Pinkish-tinged. Nay. Copper? No can do. Bronze. Not in the ballpark. Try red. Believe it when you see it.

2010 Sauvignon
2010 Pinot Gris On Skins
2010 Pinot Noir
2010 Petit Verdot
2010 Merlot

Tom Shobbrook, Adelaide Hills



Tom picked up the Gourmet Traveller/Wine Australia medal 2010 for *Best Young winemaker*. He's self taught, learning much of his trade in Italy. He built the shed in which he works, by hand. He's into biodynamics in the vineyard and minimal intervention in the winery. He doesn't do cultivated yeasts, uses only minimal sulphur, doesn't add acid and doesn't do fining.

Didi Wines are directly inspired by Tom's time in Italy rather than an unscheduled stop in Knotty Ash. The fruit is sourced from the cooler part of the Adelaide Hills and allow Tom to create wines of great structure and finesse. There are several styles under this label including a Pinot and a Nebbiolo. These are the ultimate hand-made wines.

The rosé is from Nebbiolo. When the fruit came into the winery it was left on skins for a mere 36 hours before being bled off and fermented in old oak barrels. Old oak is important in the process because this means not too much oak flavour is imparted to the wine. There may be minimal skin contact but the personality of the Nebbiolo still shines through. There is nothing confectionary or lollyish about this rosé. It's the colour of autumn, burnt amber and rusty red. On the palate, the wine is delicate, dainty tea and roses to the fore. Yet true to its Italian roots, it's a savoury experience.

For the Nebbish amongst ye Ivor Notion that this Novello is made from Nebbiolo. From the same Nebbiolo fruit as the Didi Rosé, here, however, it has been left on skins for four weeks and an additional full month in old oak. It's instructive to see how the extra time on skins and oak has affected the wine. As you'd expect, it's a light red,- more colour, fruit and structure. A food wine of finesse - roses and a little tar. What delights is Tom's ability to create such an appealing acid structure with oh-so-soft (integrated) tannins, that feel so nice in the mouth.

Tommy Ruff Shiraz-Mourvedre has a core of generous fresh fruit and some hints of savoury meatiness that opens up beautifully in the glass. Vivid, pure and vibrant with dark fruits, earth, spice, mocha and old Jamaican chocolate and the signature fine-grain tannins making it a smooth mouthful that will start with the best intentions of being just one glass and end up finishing the bottle.

2010 Didi Rosé

2010 Didi Novello Nebbiolo

2010 Tommy Ruff Shiraz-Mourvedre

Jauma, James Erskine, Barossa Valley



"I love cooking, music, drawing and vinification as each of these sensual activities I can do on my own or share with family and friends to create tangible, visible and audible representations of the spirit behind the world which forms me." So says James Erskine, brains and brawn behind Jauma (the Catalan version of James), and Natural Theory Selection conspirator.

Each of the vineyards he works with is harvested by hand using only the most sophisticated of grape analysis instruments to select the time of harvest - the senses; no pH meters or Baume refractometry, here, my friends. His primary passion is working with Grenache (Pinot of the south!) from the McLaren Vale sub-appellation Blewitt Springs but given that he lives in the Adelaide hills he also pays homage to, not Catalonia, but a few of the more interesting growers he has encountered there and produced a couple of locally grown wines. He says that he feels very lucky to have been able to set up a cellar in one of the original, basketrange sandstone buildings built in 1841 just around the corner from his family home which formerly housed the Crammond family's Jam Factory. No quips about jammy Barossa reds here.

In the cellar all ferments are wild and each vineyard's wine is made without the addition of sulphur, enzymes, fining agents, acid or tannins. None of the wines are filtered or fined and no sulphur was added until bottling when a minimal addition is made to give James the confidence to ship my wines interstate and internationally. The cellar has multiple stories so he is able to work using gravity rather than pumps. By trusting his own palate in the cellar rather than technical instruments he is able to follow and guide the will of each vineyard, the aim being to produce wines that capture both the essence of each vineyard and "my own personal, creative energies".

Alessa is named after James's wife's niece, who is "Swiss, two years old, gorgeous, fun and cheeky". The wine? The same. (Maybe not Swiss, though). Alessa has also been coined the Barossa Beaujolais. A blend of Touriga Nacional & Monastrell with nada interference on the winemaking front. Whole bunch ferment, carb mac style. Once in barrel the wine stayed on full lees, settling naturally over the cold winter nights and after seven months James was able to rack the wine to bottle. A cute effort packaged in a 50cl bottle with a yellow wax seal this red gives a warm nose of raisins and spice cut by stems and sap opening eventually into menthol and bay leaf. The heat of summer is there in the mouth too - those porty grapes aren't shrinking violets and the wine texturally is rounded and full.

Danby (Grenache, Mataro, Syrah) is about fun, slurpable drinking and as the label depicts, leaves you feeling warm inside and keen for chat with that stranger down at the end of the bar. The Grenache comes from both the Wood and Waite vineyard (located, respectively, at the top and bottom of Blewitt Springs) while the Mataro comes from Mark Jeismann's Willunga vineyard. Each of the components of this wine was fermented individually in barrels with their heads removed and no sulphur was added until bottling.

Wood Vineyard was planted fifteen years ago by retired civil engineer Ralph Wood and assisted by daughter Fiona. This vineyard is not for the light hearted, according to James. David Gartelman introduced him to the Woods, knowing he was interested in working with smart growers. Harvesting this vineyard with the Woods and their picking team he could not believe the flintiness of the site. "Every berry I put in my mouth reminded me of licking fire-flints as a child whilst exploring Aboriginal middens near my family's farm in Beachport SA. Harvesting a few bunches I was not too sure if I was harvesting Grenache or some wily mutant, the rachis (stem of the grape bunch) were thick, short and gnarly and the grape skins had very little colour but the fruit intensity was ka-boom. Fermenting this wine was a bit like peeling an onion, every week into this my last wine to press off for the vintage I became more and more confused and in the end just handed over the reins totally to the Raci god and did what I was told. This is not Grenache, this is one of the greatest examples of terroir I have seen in my backyard."

Blewitt Springs (dry -armed Grenache) Ascension is produced from the east-facing side of the vineyard ie those grapes which only see the morning sun and therefore produce a wine with less leathery/spicy character and more floral dimension. Ascension refers to the rising morning sun and the ethereal lift of the wine. This wine was fermented in a five year old puncheon with the head removed with plenty of whole bunch adding to its sinewy structure.

2010 Jauma Alessa Barossa Valley - 50cl
2010 Jauma Danby McLaren Vale
2010 Jauma Ascension Blewitt Springs
2010 Jauma "Wood Vineyard" Blewitt Springs

Natural Selection Theory, Everywhere

The Pursuit of Egg-celence



When they're not in Sydney, the Natural Selection Theory crew oscillate between vineyards in the Hunter Valley and South Australia. Their crowning glory is the 'Project Egg' Runway 3 Brokeback Semillon 2010 that ferments in nine 44-litre ceramic eggs. The ceramic eggs lie in situ in the Rozelle warehouse, behind a velvet curtain in a room lit by a single lamp shaped in the form of a naked woman. Each egg is buried in three separate soil types and played different sounds based on the soils they are buried in. Yes, they play music to their wine babies! But why eggs? "The eggs are the perfect shape for fermentation," explains Sydney-based winemaker Sam Hughes. "No hard edges. Barrels, you see, have edges, which stops the natural, circular flow that a fermentation moves in." Your own 900ml ceramic 'birthing sphere', cork-stoppered with the 'Body' wine (a blend of the three different eggs), will set you back a cool... hey these wines are so cool let's not talk about money.

Let's talk eggsecentricity.

"Each one 44 litres of individualistic, expressive, feral Hunter Semillon - freespirited souls unlike anything seen in todays mass meat market, a market where an institutionalised clone of a retro classic is still seen as cutting edge.

9 eggs housed in 3 classic soil types - insulation and inspiration from where the vine doth flourish - 3 eggs immersed in quartz sand for isolation, 3 caressed with red clay for love and finally the final trio braced with limestone for strength. In each set, 3 different skins ratios directly inspired by the question of What If? A dreamy, loving sado-masochist is in our midst, don't you just love your own kids!"

Only a handful of packs containing one of each specimen will be available, each housed in a 900ml ceramic birthing sphere.

And listen, do you hear - a lullaby to soothe their savage souls. The ethereal isolating squeal of glass; the warm loving beat of a pure heart and the power of bloody singlemindedness - a three piece band to play onwards and upwards as metal birds screech above our heads. These metal birds, 100 meters above the incubation chamber, rip as they come to roost at the gateway of Australia - Runway 3, Kingsford Smith Airport, Sydney, Australia. An explosion of the senses, each pack will feature a 12inch Album dedicated to the Sounds of Birth - music, noise, conversation, the backing track to the new day which is dawning.

So this is our wine in the year 2010. Project Egg Runway 3 - The first of its kind - 'Real' Hunter Semillon.

2010 Natural Selection Theory Hills White
2010 Natural Selection Theory Hills White - magnum
2010 Pear Cider
2010 Project Egg Runway 3 -90cl egg