



Southern stars

Many of Australia's exciting new wines are being made by Victoria's next-generation grape-treaders.

The Victorian wine industry has long been peppered

with rebels, single-minded individuals who love to challenge the status quo: think of the irascible Gary Farr of Bannockburn; the irritable Bailey Carrodus of Yarra Yering; the inscrutable Rick Kinzbrunner of Giaconda; the recently departed, inspiring Trevor Mast of Mount Langi Ghiran. Now, of course, these men are all legends, but when they started out in the 1960s, '70s and '80s, the styles of wine they produced were revolutionary.

The spirit and legacy of these pioneers and innovators is alive and well in Victoria in the second decade of the 21st century, with the sons and daughters of the first wave joined by a new flood of talent. Whether they're planting new grape varieties in Victorian soil or reinvigorating old styles from established regions, this second (and third) wave of grape-treaders is producing some of the most exciting wines in the country.

Rollo Crittenden is a good example of the next generation. Son of Garry Crittenden (the founder of Dromana Estate who was inducted into the legends hall of fame at this year's Melbourne Food & Wine Festival), Rollo and his sister, Zoe, are leading the way with fun, accessible, affordable Spanish-influenced wines

under the Los Hermanos label. The latest in the line-up, released last year, is the most adventurous: named Saludo al Txakoli, modelled on the tangy dry whites of the Basque country, and made from the fragrant petit manseng grape, this ultra-refreshing, slightly spritzig wine is unlike any other Victorian white I can think of and is screaming to be paired with a fishy tapa.

Other winemakers across the state are exploring Italian white grapes and wine styles to great effect. Kathleen Quealy is hardly a newcomer (with husband Kevin McCarthy she established the T'Gallant winery back in the early 1990s), but this perennially curious vigneron is ahead of many younger winemakers with the white friulano she made in 2011: after 24 hours of skin contact, the juice spent three months fermenting in 800-litre amphorae, resulting in the most remarkably complex, savoury and rich wine.

Kim Chalmers and her family now have two vintages under their belts at their new vineyard in Heathcote, proving that the Italian varieties they pioneered on the hot banks of the Murray River back in the early 2000s are also well suited to the rich red soil of central Victoria. The juicy, slurpy red wines produced from nero d'avola grapes grown at this vineyard in 2011 point to a very exciting future here.

And while he established his reputation with taut, nervy shiraz and fragrant viognier from the Sutton Grange vineyard south of Bendigo, winemaker Gilles Lapalus has branched out with huge success into Italian varieties and natural wines: his profoundly textural and long-tasting 2010 white fiano and the gently pink, slightly cloudy 2011 Fairbank Ancestral Sparkling (which finished its primary ferment in the bottle) are two of the most eye-opening wines I have tasted in the past six months.

Less-mainstream French grapes are also making their mark. For example, while the D'Anna family produce superb chardonnay and pinot noir at their Hoddles Creek Estate vineyard in the southern Yarra Valley (particularly in 2010 – look out for the exceptional expressions of both these grapes under the label 1er Yarra Valley), the wine that sends chills down my spine is the pinot blanc (sold under the same 1er label), especially in the richer, fruitier 2010 vintage and the leaner, more minerally 2011 vintage – this wine is so good, so sophisticated, that I seriously wonder why more people don't plant it and make it.

That said, though, the revolution in Australian chardonnay also continues to gain momentum and interest, with David Bicknell from Oakridge releasing no fewer than four single-site chardonnays from the 2011 vintage under the Local Vineyard range. Through these wines the drinker can take a virtual journey across the valley, from the gentle rolling finesse of the Denton chardonnay on grey stony warm soils of the flatlands north of the river to the tangy focus of the Lusatia Park chardonnay in the cool, high volcanic soils in the south.

Single vineyards are also the focus for Gary Mills of Jamsheed, although the grape in question here is shiraz – or, as Mills and many of his contemporaries like>

Young talent team

Clockwise from top left: Rollo Crittenden of Crittenden Estate, Franco D'Anna of Hoddles Creek Estate and Eleana Anderson of Mayford are part of the new generation leading Victoria's wine trends.

to call it, syrah. Mills is a big fan of fermenting his syrah using whole bunches and he judiciously uses different proportions depending on the vineyard and region. So while his 2010 Silvan Syrah, for example, from the southern Yarra Valley, is 100 per cent whole bunch to emphasise the punchy, bright cooler-climate juiciness, his brooding, gravelly, growly 2010 Great Western Syrah picked from vines planted in the 1890s Garden Gully vineyard is only 50 per cent whole bunch to support but not overwhelm the richer regional fruit flavours.

Like the Jamsheed Great Western Syrah, a number of Victoria's best modern reds come from old vineyards tended by new hands. After 14 vintages at Giaconda and importing barrels from France, Douglas Neal started working with Graham and Ruth Bonny at the Paradise IV vineyard just outside Geelong in 2006. While these vines are just shy of being a quarter of a century old, they're on the site of a famous 19th-century vineyard, and the reds that Neal is making have a fantastically old-and-new-fashioned feel to them: the Dardel, for example, named after Jean Henri Dardel, the original Swiss-Victorian vigneron, is a black wine with firm, claret-like tannins and slippery modern fruit.

Others of the best Victorian reds, though, come from brand-new sites. Eleana Anderson and Bryan Nicholson have been growing tempranillo in their Mayford vineyard at Porepunkah in the high north-east country only since 2002, but they have completely nailed the style already: in fact, I would tentatively suggest that their 2010, with its tight purple fruit and fine, persistent tannins, is the best tempranillo yet produced in Australia. And if it's this good already, after just a handful of vintages, imagine how much better it – and Victorian wines in general – will be in the future.*

MAY WINE NEWS

A LEGEND PASSES

I'd like to pay tribute to legendary Victorian winemaker Trevor Mast, who died in early March after a struggle with Alzheimer's. As well as being a pioneer of spicy cool-climate shiraz at the Mount Langi Ghiran vineyard in the Grampians, Trevor was an inspiration for many in the industry, and an innovator: he introduced new grapes such as sangiovese and pinot grigio into the Langi line-up and moved the vineyard to sustainable farming long before alternative varieties and green viticulture were fashionable. He was a no-bullshit, plain-speaking character, not one to suffer fools (or journalists) gladly. And he made some awesome wines: the 1994 Langi shiraz is still one of the best Australian reds I've ever tasted.

WINE BUSINESSES FOR SALE

In 2002 Trevor Mast sold Mount Langi Ghiran to Doug Rathbone, of Nufarm agrochemical company and the Rathbone Wine Group. Now Rathbone is looking to sell his wine assets: Langi and high-quality stablemates Yering Station in the Yarra Valley, Xanadu in Margaret River and Parker Coonawarra Estate. Put in your offers.

GLASSWARE WITH FINESSE

Are you wine-obsessed? Happy to spend serious cash on wine glasses to match the serious cash you spent on that coveted bottle? Then check out the range of Zalto glassware shipped by International Fine Wines: at \$52 to \$60 a stem they're not exactly designed for the dishwasher, but they are exquisitely delicate, light as air and beautiful to drink from. internationalfinewines.com.au

NEW NEW ZEALAND

Exciting discoveries at the recent New Zealand in a Glass tasting: generous, textural 2009 Trinity Hill Gimblett Gravels Tempranillo from Hawkes Bay (\$38); savoury and complex 2009 Maude Mount Maude Vineyard Pinot Noir from Central Otago (\$55); excellent 2011 Marlborough grüner veltliners from Babich (\$26) and Konrad (\$27); organically grown, minimal-additive 2011 Estate syrahs and viogniers (both \$19) from Moana Park in Hawkes Bay.

Hot property

Yering Station in the Yarra Valley could soon be under new ownership.



TOP DROPS OF THE MONTH



BARGAIN

2010 Rymill The Yearling Cabernet Sauvignon, Coonawarra, SA, \$14.95

Take a winemaker who specialises in savoury styles of red, combine with a top vintage and there you have it: exceptional value Coonawarra cab with fine black fruit and great finesse. Drink with veal schnitzel.



WHITE

2011 Chrismont Petit Manseng, King Valley, Vic, \$26

Petit manseng comes originally from France's south-west, but is clearly at home in Victoria's north-east. This complex dry white has gorgeous subtle perfume and full-bodied richness. Drink with fish curry.



RED

2011 Smallfry Joven, Barossa Valley, SA, \$20

This is a beautifully boisterous Barossa blend of tempranillo, grenache, mataro and bastardo (a Portuguese port grape), with heaps of juicy red fruit laid on top of earthy dried herbs. Drink with tapas.



IMPORT

2007 Traversa Langhe Nebbiolo, Piedmont, Italy, \$40

Classic old-school nebb: it looks like rusty water and, drunk on its own, tastes like sucking on dried leather – but try it with cured pork products to reveal velvety fruit and perfume. Drink with salami.



CELLAR

2011 Grosset Polish Hill Riesling, Clare Valley, SA, \$49

A triumph from a decidedly difficult, cool and wet vintage. This riesling is gorgeous now – subtle, perfumed and precise – but it will also blossom over 10 years and more. Drink with grilled fish.



SWEET

2011 Bloodwood Silk Purse, Orange, NSW, 375ml, \$27

The Doyles' vineyard in Orange is the source of some cracking stickies. Here's the latest: a gorgeously balanced sweet riesling, luscious but refreshing, too. Drink with apple tart.

For more wine tastings visit gourmettraveller.com.au.

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