

october 2009



## Our news

No one has ever claimed that growing grapes or making wine is an easy gig. Vintage 2009 certainly has added another verse to this well-known tune. Fast forward to October 2009 and the mood has shifted as green shoots flood the horizon. Winter has concluded with an early spring and another growing season looms large.

It cannot be denied that the Yarra, like many wine growing regions is in a critical time. With drought conditions, ongoing predictions of high fire risk not to mention frost, growing grapes has never been more challenging. Throw into the mix a surplus of wine in most key markets coupled with the weakest image Australian wine has had in decades and the wine industry has woken up wondering what happened.

Over the last couple of years we have taken certain steps that provide us with belief that our team and structure are right to cope with such challenges. Compared with two years ago, we are now working solely with Yarra and Strathbogie Ranges vineyards (now eight in total), which in most cases we are managing ourselves.

### **Our direction**

October 2009 is our first release of five single vineyard pinot noirs from various Yarra sub-regions. This is an exciting time. As you can see in this newsletter, we have been working on a sub-regional map. This and the wines themselves are forming the platform for us to consider sub-regionality in the Yarra Valley. This is going to be contentious to many in the industry who consider that added complexity is unnecessary. We believe that we need to show how we are maturing and growing and exploring differences

across sub-regions is a major part of our journey. From our perspective, this is where interest and growth, both in wine quality and fruit understanding, has huge potential. By releasing these wines separately, we can share this journey. We anticipate that what we are proposing now will become a starting point in a quest for a better understanding of our environment. And whilst we are sure that this initial proposal of sub-regional boundaries will shift with time, we are excited to see what unfolds.

Let's remember that the Australian wine industry was primarily built on fortified wines. These fortified wines were assembled by blending younger and older wines from various vineyards. For Australia, blending was and in some cases still is our trade. From the 1950's our industry began to change with a shift from fortified wines into table wines. As this transition took place many of the blending philosophies and vineyards remained.

It is interesting to note that the two largest exporters of wine to the UK over the last couple of centuries have been Bordeaux and the Douro (Port). Both these regions have also been built around blending. Having said that, the majority of wine regions that inspire many wine consumers from around the globe are regions that aim to capture and express different parcels of fruit that may be only marginally larger than a typical suburban back yard. This very European approach to wine and fruit expression has gradually found a place here in Australia. No doubt as we become more educated about our own soils and environment and achieve better plant health and fruit quality, we can feel more secure in moving away from blending.





### Our release

And this leads us to our new release and realising the ambition that Tony, Dylan and I harbour; to work with a number of small, highly individual vineyards across the Yarra Valley and look to retain what is unique about each site. To explore why the wines are different and enjoy these differences. Mac Forbes will not be around in 100 years but pinot noir in Woori Yallock will hopefully still display the wonderful purity and depth of structure that we are gradually coming to associate with fruit grown in this area.

My thanks must be extended again to Tony and Dylan. We have invested a lot of time and emotional energy to work through the 2009 summer issues. The reward hopefully will come in the reception of the wines we are releasing this month. We are excited about all the wines with special mention of the pinot noirs. And we look forward to seeing you at one of our launch events.

*Mac*

### Review of vintage 2008

The 2008 growing season started early, with warmer than average conditions from budburst up to Christmas and through to January. Luckily spring frosts were avoided with vines growing very rapidly early. Ideal conditions were present for all varieties at flowering, which resulted in good fruit-set and very full bunches. A wetter than average December carried the vines through well into veraison and the lead up to harvest. Optimum maturity was reached for the wine styles at harvest, which fortunately was completed earlier than usual, just prior to a strong heat wave in March.

### Events

#### Winery Open Day

Saturday 24th October 11am – 4pm  
BBQ facilities available  
Pinot Noir Masterclass 11am – 12.30pm  
Numbers are limited

#### Mac Forbes 2009 Release

**Melbourne:** Dinner at Taxi – 28th October  
Five courses with matching new release and back vintage wines  
\$140 per person, numbers are limited. Booking is essential.

**Perth:** Dinner at Bar 1 – 22nd October, 7pm start  
Five course degustation menu with matching new release wines  
\$145 per person, numbers are limited. Booking is essential.

*For further information on either of these events and to secure your seat, please contact Mac at [mac@macforbes.com](mailto:mac@macforbes.com) or 0432 234 927.*

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