

## Islander with a European twist

JAMES HALLIDAY THE AUSTRALIAN SEPTEMBER 13, 2014 12:00AM

**THE Islander Estate's Jacques Lurton is a member of a distinguished family wine business in Graves, Bordeaux, but left the nest to work as a consultant in many parts of the world, including Australia, as an early Flying Winemaker.**

Lurton became familiar with semillon early in his wine life in Bordeaux and developed a love of Hunter Valley semillon. He is the only French winemaker to even think about semillon as a stand-alone variety. So when he established The Islander Estate in 2000, it was one of the key varieties. His approach was eclectic, both in the choice of varieties and the way he trained them with a European twist: a mix of untrellised bush vines, vines on single stakes, and some on a conventional trellis.

While he planted mainstream varieties such as shiraz, grenache, sangiovese, viognier and semillon, he focused on cabernet franc and malbec for his hallmark red wines and semillon as his key white wine. He also made the wine in a way the Hunter Valley did not recognise: fermentation of cloudy juice in a 600-litre demi muid cask. He uses these casks extensively for long-term maturation as well as fermentation. He also uses concrete fermenters, made in Burgundy as burial crypts, the finish so fine he does not need to wax them.

He recently hosted a lunchtime tasting of The Islander's '05, '06, '08 and '12 semillons, the first two with 5% viognier, but 100% semillon from '08 onwards. The same quartet of cabernet francs were also poured. The '05 with 5% sangiovese, the '06 with 5% malbec, thereafter made as a stand-alone. In each case, vine maturity eliminated the need for added complexity.

Each bursts with individuality and integrity, the synthesis of winemaking with unequalled fusion of art and science from northern and southern, eastern and western hemispheres.

2008 The Islander Estate Vineyards The Investigator Cabernet Franc

Spent six to eight weeks on skins to complete primary and malolactic fermentation before being basket-pressed; thereafter three years in demi muids, the only addition SO<sub>2</sub> (no acid). Exceptional crimson hue; bright red fruits, bramble, savoury tannins in excellent balance, oak adding to the package. 14.5% alc; cork

95 points; drink to 2028; \$70

2012 The Islander Estate Vineyards Majestic Plough Kangaroo Island Malbec

Made in the same fashion as above in the concrete tomb-turned-fermenter, matured in large format oak. Dense, deep crimson-purple; medium to full-bodied, not extractive or tannic. Copy- book malbec. 14% alc; cork

95 points; drink to 2027; \$35

2012 The Islander Estate Vineyards Wally White Semillon



The three The Islander Estate wines reviewed this week.  
Source: Supplied

Fermentation/maturation in new French demi muids on gross lees ex fermentation has had a major impact on the texture, structure and flavour of this wine; its grass, herb and mineral boundaries catch all within and demand time in bottle (not less than 5 years) to fully expose its heart. Its balance and finesse will underwrite its long-term future. 13.8% alc; screwcap

94 points; drink to 2027; \$35

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