



HOOKED ON WINE

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1 note &

Lurton finds his wine island



Jacques Lurton is as Australian as a Frenchman can be. He is a member of one of the most famous wine families of not only the Bordeaux region, but the world - a family that owns 13 independent wineries in the Graves/Pessac-Leognan, St Emilion, Entre-Deux-Mers and Sauternes districts, and has wine properties in Spain, Portugal, Chile, Argentina and every region of France. And he chose to be a pioneer on Kangaroo Island. What the hell?

Jacques was a 'flying winemaker' who travelled the world making wine for a British wine club. He first came to Australia in 1984, and worked for McWilliams (tastings) in Griffith, then for Brian Croser at Petaluma (tastings), then created a company here with his brother. He lives in the Entre-Deux-Mers near Bordeaux but for the last 30 years he's been to Australia at least once a year. "In 2000 I had the opportunity to buy land on Kangaroo Island and plant vines there. Everything I produce is grown and

About

Hulon Hooke is a leading Australian wine expert and show judge, best weekly columns in Sydney Herald Good Food, an editor, tasting panel member, columnist at Gourmet Magazine.

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Jacques Lurton is as Australian as a Frenchman can be. Now he's making wine on Kangaroo Island @islander_estate tumblr.co/ZxWjPx1QftNI- Expand



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Sam Coverdale of Polperna @evenkeelwines is one of the young vintners and young winemakers plving

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made on the island. There are only four official wineries on the island, 16 labels, 25 vineyards and 170 hectares under vines.”

Lurton’s brand is The Islander Estate. He does things his way. The wines are idiosyncratic; not especially Australian in style; and you don’t get the impression they’re driven by any commercial imperatives. He does what he likes. His top white wine is named The Wally (tastings) and is a semillon, although minor amounts of other varieties were blended in the early vintages. “Semillon has mostly disappeared for dry white in Bordeaux,” he says, “and now it is mainly used for sweet wines. But I know that the best Graves/Pessac-Leognan wines of the last were semillon.”

The Wally is a fuller flavoured semillon, more like Barossa or Clare than Hunter, but a very good wine, especially in cooler years such as 2012. “I have always placed semillon very high in Australia, and I’m very happy with the semillons I’ve made in the Hunter Valley, too.”

And his top red is called The Investigator (tastings), simultaneously summoning the notions of being a pioneer on KI (as the locals call it) and a Frenchman in Australia, which the 18th and 19th Century French navigators explored and charted – at least bits of its southern and south-western coastline. Again Jacques is rowing his own boat: the wine is a cabernet franc. The early vintages sometimes had a blender, malbec or sangiovese, but lately they’re pure franc.

“I wanted to make the best red that I could on Kangaroo Island. Chateau Cheval Blanc (tastings) is sometimes 60% cabernet franc. The Loire Valley is too cool and the cabernet franc is too acidic; not ripe enough to show the variety’s full capabilities. It is necessary to have very low yields, to pick it fully ripe with no herbaceousness, and basket press it, and add all the pressings back to the wine. Then I gave it three years in oak – although the 2012 had only two years in oak. My aim is to have a wine of finesse and elegance, not a bold or overripe style, but finesse in the tannins, balance, and refreshing on the finish.”

The 2012 The Islander The Investigator (tasting) certainly achieves these aims. Investigator, of course, was Matthew Flinders’ ship. The name is no accident. There’s that pioneering link again. You can just imagine Flinders and Nicolas Baudin sharing a cup of tea on board Baudin’s ship, the Geographe, in Encounter Bay, near Kangaroo Island, in 1803 - not realising their countries were no longer at war.

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