

# World wine web

In a tale of two hemispheres, Australian wine benefits from the best of both worlds.

**T**HE TERM “FLYING WINEMAKERS” came into being in the late 1970s, when a bunch of young, technically savvy Australian winemakers ventured over to the hallowed ground of wine—France. Now industry stalwarts, Andrew Hardy, David Lowe and Martin Shaw led the pack then, initially working at some of France’s most illustrious châteaux and later, and perhaps more importantly, at humble regional cooperatives. With their enthusiasm, work ethos and wine-science skills, the trickle of flying winemakers became a regular flow, one that continues unabated. ➤



## 2008 THE ISLANDER ESTATE WALLY WHITE

Kangaroo Island, South Australia \$46

Jacques Lurton takes a Bordelaise approach blending unlikely bedfellows semillon and viognier. The semillon makes sense – it’s a major grape in his Bordeaux home ground – but adding viognier is inspirational. It brings exotic spice, fruit depth and shape to the otherwise lean and austere semillon.

## 2010 PRIMO & CO THE TUSCAN SHIRAZ SANGIOVESE

Tuscany, Italy \$25

Joe Grilli is one of Australia’s most lateral-thinking makers, capable of turning the humble colombard into his sought-after La Biondina. His local Il Briccone Shiraz Sangiovese is echoed by his Tuscan counterpart, with generous spiced plum and fresh tobacco aromas set in a frame of mild-mannered tannins.

## 2010 GRAILLOT SYRAH

Heathcote, Victoria \$53

In a little more than 25 years, producer Alain Grillot has made a huge impact in Crozes-Hermitage, and his maiden Australian syrah indicates he may have equal influence here. Elegance is the key – it’s lightly structured, but has depth and length, with savoury flavours of spiced dark berries and gentle but persistent tannins.

## 2010 MARCHAND & BURCH MOUNT BARROW PINOT NOIR

Mt Barker, Western Australia \$70

Pascal Marchand espouses a strong biodynamic philosophy with his intense yet delicate wines – a sure indication he is on the right track. Subtle red fruits, dried herbs, truffle and gamey aromas lead to a refined palate. Well defined tannins add structure and an overall savoury edge to the finish.

Walk into almost any winery in the Northern Hemisphere during vintage and you'll recognise a familiar Aussie twang. Wineries in France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany, Austria and even Turkey regularly employ crew from the Antipodes because they're technically knowledgeable, hardworking and fun. Working two vintages a year (the Northern Hemisphere vintage runs from August to November) helps fast-track our young winemakers' experience and knowledge – know-how that is freely shared within the world of wine.

The flying winemaker flight path now operates both ways, with many European winemakers visiting Australian shores annually. The Pizzini family is heavily into Italian grape varieties and so, each year, one of Italy's foremost wine men, Alberto Antonini, leaves Tuscany to visit Fred Pizzini in Victoria's King Valley. Next stop is Greenstone vineyard in nearby Heathcote, which Antonini owns in partnership with local viticultural pioneer Mark Walpole and British importer David Gleave.

While Antonini is in Heathcote, he may chance upon Rhône wine producer Alain Graillot, who, with local importer Rob Walters, has earmarked a plot of Greenstone vineyard for their exciting Graillot Project.

Another Rhône producer, Marc Chapoutier, may also be loitering nearby at Jasper Hill, where he has been working for more than a decade with Ron Laughton producing a local syrah – La Pleiade.

With pinot noir the hottest variety on the local scene, Burgundy has long been a stopover destination for our flying winemakers. Gary Farr spent 20 years oscillating between Bannockburn, Victoria, and Domaine Dujac, Burgundy, before launching his own By Farr wines. Today, it's his son Nick who continues the exchange program, while a number of Burgundians, such as fifth-generation Pierre Naigeon, are involved in winemaking ventures in both countries. Woolworths imports Naigeon's Burgundies and has jointly created the Clos Pierre range of local wines, sold exclusively through its retail outlets.

**M**ONTREAL NATIVE PASCAL MARCHAND, who moved to Burgundy in 1983, met Howard Park's Amy and Jeff Burch over a neighbourly glass of pinot in the Côte d'Or. A few (decent) bottles later the Marchand & Burch partnership was formed, with Marchand making a swath of Burgundies, from the value-for-money Bourgogne Blanc and Rouge to the top-flight Chambertin Clos de Bèze. Not content with this alone, the pair also produces a quartet of wines from Howard Park's Great Southern vineyards – a chardonnay, two pinots and a shiraz.

Another flying winemaker whose frequent-flyer points are stacked high is Jacques Lurton of the esteemed Bordeaux wine family. Lurton first came to Australia in 1984 and has been dabbling ever since, bringing his bride to honeymoon on Kangaroo Island in 1997. Lurton has now made a serious commitment to KI thanks to his The Islander Estate, comprising 300ha with 11ha under vine and an on-site winery. Meanwhile, Lurton continues to make and import wines from Bordeaux, as well as the Loire Valley and Spain.

This international cross-pollination could be seen as homogenising, but the knowledge and expertise is shared to make more stimulating wines. The traffic flows both ways. Yarra Valley young gun Mac Forbes is making and importing Grüner Veltliner and Blaufränkisch from Austria under his own eponymous label. Second-generation Italian Joe Grilli first made wine in Italy for then Hardy family-owned Ricosoli back in the 1980s and has recently formed Primo & Co to make and market his Italian wines. And young Aussie Justin Bubb has released a smart range of wines from Tuscany and Sicily under the Babo banner, drawing on his solid experience working in Italy. 