

Secret island hideaway gets a continental twist

HE'S A member of one of France's most famous wine dynasties; a winemaker and consultant who has worked in beautiful vineyard regions all over the world, but Jacques Lurton has settled on Kangaroo Island, South Australia, as the place where he wants to spend much of his time in the future.

Lurton owns Domaine de la Martinette in Bordeaux, a region where his family is hugely influential, as well as making the Jacques Selection wines from the Loire Valley (Pouilly and Touraine) and consulting to leading vigneron around France, but his decision to pour his heart and soul into his Islander Estate operation on Kangaroo Island is the culmination of a 25-year love affair with Australia.

Lurton, who has worked in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Moldova, California, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile, did his first Australian vintage at Hanwood in 1984, alongside Bernard Hickin, who is now chief winemaker at Jacob's Creek.

He's since worked another 20 vintages here and is regarded as an honorary Australian by his South Australian friends.

Lurton and his late wife Françoise, who was an artist, visited Kangaroo Island on their honeymoon in 1997. When he decided to establish his own cool-climate Australian vineyard and winery the choice was between the Adelaide Hills — a much more conventional choice — or Kangaroo Island.

He and McLaren Vale vigneron David



Winsor Dobbin
Off The Vine

Paxton identified some ideal sites, did several surveys, and Lurton bought a 300-hectare property which was planted with an 11-hectare vineyard in 2000.

"I just had a feeling it was a great spot," Lurton said on a recent visit to Tasmania for the opening of MONA. "And I've never regretted it. It's somewhere I can make a very different style of wine — the style of wine I like — and I never have to add acid to the fruit."

Today, Kangaroo Island, off the Fleurieu Peninsula, is regarded as one of Australia's most promising new wine regions. Leading wine writer James Halliday has described Australia's third-largest island as "one of South Australia's best-kept secrets" and there are now close to 30 vineyards. Lurton describes it as having "no services, no labour and not easy" but says he's learned to love the beauty and slower pace.

While Lurton's very European-style wines were slow to find favour with Australian drinkers (he says Australians are now "broadening their wine horizons") Lurton exports Islander Estate wines to Europe, North America, the Middle East and Asia.

'It's somewhere I can make a very different style of wine — the style of wine I like'



Iconic French winemaker Jacques Lurton has opted for Kangaroo Island to craft some wines he likes.

Lurton chose varieties he had enjoyed working with around the world — cabernet franc, malbec, sangiovese, shiraz, grenache, viognier and semillon and chose close spacing with vertical canopy for all bar grenache and shiraz, which were planted as bush vines. His wines, generally elegant, spend up to three years in oak and are only released when he considers them ready to drink.

Lurton says he enjoys the freedom from French appellation controlee rules; his Islander Estate flagship wine is Yakka Jack, an unusual blend of cabernet franc and sangiovese.

Wine dinners

The Terrace Restaurant at Country Club Tasmania has put together an impressive program of wine dinners for 2011, starting with a Josef Chromy event on March 18. The evening will include a four-course dinner plus canapes with each course matched with wines.

Guests can hear the story behind the wines from industry veteran Chromy and winemaker Jeremy Dineen.

Interspersed with regular cork and fork tastings, food and beverage manager Richard Pobitzer has put together a fascinating program of wine dinners, including a "Young Guns" evening featuring several outstanding emerging winemakers on May 13.

A Brown Brothers dinner with Ross Brown has been pencilled in for July 8.

For bookings and enquiries phone 6335 5777 or email reservations@countryclubtasmania.com.au.

Pick of the Crop



**Moores Hill
2010
Riesling \$25
CD**

ANOTHER winner from the reliable Moores Hill stable of Julian Allport and another stunningly good Tassie Riesling: a variety that is vastly under-rated. This Tamar Valley wine offers promise from the first fragrant aromas and delivers with punchy, vibrant freshness on the palate where Granny Smith apple flavours and lemon and lime zest are in abundance. There's plenty of lively, zingy acid, too, making this the perfect after work drink great partner for seafood.



**Jacques
Lurton 2008
Pouilly Fumé
\$55
www.iev.com.au**

NOT your regular sauvignon blanc by any means. From one of the most famous wine villages of the Loire Valley and made by a French master craftsman, this is a standout wine with many layers of textures allied to elegance, minerality and drinkability. It has considerable complexity and richness thanks to having been barrel fermented and aged in oak. Most Aussie and Kiwi savvys are unoaked, so this is a wine style to challenge and delight.



**The Story
2009
Westgate
Vineyard
Shiraz \$45
www.thestory.com.au**

RORY Lane, one of the wine industry's rising stars, is making some cracking wines. I tasted this during the Australian Open and scribbled that it was "the Roger Federer of wines — effortlessly impressive". A former archaeologist with a degree in Greek literature, Lane makes a range of cool-climate Grampians shirazes, all thinking men's (or women's) wines. Earthy, beautifully balanced, beguiling with measured oak treatment and sensible alcohol at 13.5 per cent this is outstanding.



**Chapel Hill
2010 Il
Vescovo
Pinot Grigio
\$20**

MOST Australian wine producers appear to be opting for the more savoury/textural style of pinot gris rather than the lighter, brighter style of pinot grigio but Michael Fragos and Bryn Richards at Chapel Hill in McLaren Vale have hit the ball for six with this crunchy, fresh and lively wine that's unashamedly grigio with a tropical fruit bouquet and lots of lively acidity on the palate. This is not a cerebral wine, but it is one for enjoying well chilled on a warm evening, maybe with some seafood.



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