

Deakin wines honour regional visionaries



Grapegrowers & Vignerons, APRIL 2011 – Featured in 'Vine to Wine'

Author: Jacinta Rose

The Mildura region was transformed from an arid, scrubby 'no man's land' to an agricultural oasis in the 1880s.

Alfred Deakin, a former Australian Prime Minister, encourages California's Chaffey brothers to bring their irrigation expertise to the vast inland valley of the Murray River in north west Victoria.

Since then, the Murray Valley region – spanning along the Murray River from Swan hill to Wentworth where the Darling River joins the Murray – has become one of Australia's most productive and prosperous sources of high quality produce, including citrus, olives, almonds and grapes.



The Murray River, 2011

The Deakin Estate property and its wines are named in honour of Alfred Deakin, who was instrumental in creating the valuable irrigation industries that hold the region together.

Purchased in 1967, Deakin Estate produced premium winegrapes which were sold as fruit until 1980, when the company's winery was built.

By the time the Deakin Estate range was launched in 1994, the first vines planted on the property were already decades old while newer plantings helped diversify the wine offering.

The company's efforts are focused on producing fruit of the highest quality, which is then transformed into expressive wines brimming with flavour and varietal character.

Deakin Estate wines are classically styled and technically clean, and are appreciated by consumers as good value, flavoursome and well-balanced.

The company's winery processes approximately 15,000 tonnes of fruit each year using modern Australian wine-making methods to increase efficiency.

Core principles implemented to capture the vibrant fruit flavours include night harvesting, refrigeration, inert gas cover, rotary drum vacuum and earth filtration, finely tuned palate fining and careful blending.

The Deakin Estate vineyards receive an average of 268 millimetres of rainfall every year, and experience an average maximum and minimum temperature of 31.7 degrees Celsius and 10.4C respectively.

Cont'd...

Deakin Estate recognises water as a precious resource, which in many areas is becoming increasingly scarce.

Specialised tools are used to ensure water is managed correctly on all vineyards, with particular attention given to the amount of water applied to ensure this matches the ability of the soil to hold and store water, and of the plant to extract water.

Efforts to reduce Deakin Estate's environmental footprint are not confined to the vineyards, but are instead adopted throughout the wine-making process.

In conjunction with O-I Glass, the company has begun using lighter glass bottles in key export markets.

This strategy provides a strong tool in the battle against bulk wine shipments, and will reduce costs in freight handling from the bottling line through to the end customer. An additional 840 bottles now fit in a standard six-metre container, meaning the move to light-weight glass offers significant benefits in terms of transport costs and fuel use.

Cutting back on carbon use is one of Deakin Estate's more recent missions, further enhancing the company's green credentials.

With guidance from the Carbon Reduction Institute, Deakin Estate is working to become a zero carbon organisation.



From the winemaker

2010 Sauvignon Blanc – rrp \$10

This is the biggest selling imported sauvignon blanc in New Zealand. We cannot help but wonder if that is a result of winemaker Phil Spillman polishing his sauvignon blanc skills at Villa Maria before moving to Deakin Estate. The wine was cold fermented, clarified then swiftly bottled to retain the bright, fresh and fruity flavours. It has fresh lime juice characters, with some floral and fruit salad flavours with the essential bright acid finish.

2010 Chardonnay – rrp \$10

This wine has changed the most in style from last year. There is a tiny amount of oak, as some wine was barrel fermented using a dozen yeast strains. Phil said he was aiming to develop lots of complexities from the different yeasts and a hint of malty oak. At the core is real citrus and apple. It is incredibly bright with citrus, pineapple, pear and apple flavours. This is much brighter than any style Deakin Estate has made before and well away from the peachy style of former days. It is more acidic, a bit sweeter and lower in alcohol, meaning fruit intensity becomes prevalent.

2010 Viognier – rrp \$10

The Deakin Estate Viognier is unique in that it is picked earlier, does not go into oak and is made using aromatic yeasts. Phil made the wine in a riesling style – cold stainless steel fermented with an aromatic yeast. The wine shows tropical fruit salad flavours – pineapple and feijoa feature – with a savoury overtone. The 2008 is ageing really well and based on this, Phil estimates that the 2010 will age equally well over the next 10 years.

2010 Rosé – rrp \$10

This is a blend of merlot, tempranillo and petit verdot. It is lower in alcohol than the 2009 with medium sweetness. The philosophy with the style change is to produce a lighter pale pink colour, lower the alcohol and ensure balance in a soft, gentle way. There is also more complexity arising from the different varieties. This wine did not go into oak, allowing the clean and fragrant flavours of pink fruits - watermelon, raspberry and pomegranate - to come to the fore.

2010 Pinot Noir – rrp \$10

The 2010 is a half-half blend of Coonawarra and Murray Darling fruit, all made at Deakin Estate. The wine was in the fermenter for eight weeks as opposed to one week for the other reds. The wine was cold soaked for two weeks, then fermented slowly for four weeks, followed by another two weeks post-ferment maceration. The wine went straight to press then back to chilled tank, with 25 per cent racked to old oak barrels for maturation. Careful fining and blending followed. The final wine is soft and supple with a raw-silk texture.