

“Carving its own niche”

JAMES HALLIDAY

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ON THE FACE OF IT, Deakin Estate is in the centre of a perfect storm: a drought-ravaged Murray Darling; a significant grape surplus; a barrage of criticism from overseas journalists levelled at the type of wine it produces; and the perceived desire of the industry to distance itself from Brand Australia and refocus on higher quality, higher priced regional wines.

The reality is quite different. For a start, the 390ha of vines it owns or manages stand alongside 125ha of oranges, mangoes and avocados. Moreover, its horticultural activities date back to the late 1960s, and its water licenses are such that it has had no need to buy water.

That said, it is not sitting passively waiting for water entitlements to be savagely cut: aerial mapping and neutron probes are the cornerstones of precision viticulture. Overnight watering via dripper lines and complex water management techniques are used. The combination of grapes, oranges and avocados means year-round work for the eight permanent employees, and evens out the cash flow, although citrus growing, like grapes, is a chancy business. There's not much Deakin Estate can do about a national grape surplus, but it is in the enviable position of growing roughly half of its annual 19,000-tonne crush and relying on contract growers for the other half, giving it room to manoeuvre.

Deakin exports its wines to 30 countries, but is insulated from the woes of the UK and the US. In the UK its focus has always been on-premise, not the super-markets, and the US has never been a core market. Thus in the 2008-09 financial year, Australia's exports shrank 10.9pc by volume, while Deakin Estate's grew by 7pc.

Finally, Deakin Estate has an ultra-modern winery and a gifted chief winemaker in Dr Phil Spillman. Spillman worked for Chittering Estate in the warm Perth Hills, then BRL Hardy and thereafter Villa Maria Estate for three years before joining Deakin Estate in 2004. Along the way he fitted in a stint with the Australian Wine Research Institute, and in 1997 gained his PhD in oenology from the University of Adelaide.

Deakin Estate has a consistency and clarity of branding reminiscent of Rosemount Estate in its glory days. It's a potent mix.

www.deakinestate.com.au

Deakin Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2008



“Damn fine value”.

Damn fine value for a \$10 wine. It's clean and pure with good varietal characters on nose and palate. Soft tannins and gentle oak introduction. Current drinking quaffing at the right price. 86/100

Ray Jordan, The West Australian, 1st July 2010

“Midweek Magic”.

Dr Phil Spillman wrests surprising bargains from his estate vines - shiraz and cabernet the stars. The flavour. Happy, easy drinking that has a little mint and mulberry, dusty gum leaf with lovely juicy fruit.

RATINGS: 3 stars : VALUE: Terrific

Tony Love, Herald Sun, 22nd June 2010

Deakin Estate Shiraz 2008



“Rating: 90.”

A juicy and very fruity shiraz displaying vibrant fleshy fruit intensity. Has fine firmish tannins threading through the soft medium-bodied palate. Nice full plum flavours with a little sprinkle of spices.

Peter Forrestal, West Australian, 19th Nov 2009

“You can't ask for more at the price.”

This Deakin Estate Shiraz is an interesting wine. It's full of sweet jubey fruit flavour. Raspberry and currants. Has a brightness and a fleshiness and an easy-drinking fruitiness. Wish this was in the Big Red Wine Book. 88 Points

**Campbell Mattinson,
Winefront Monthly, 31st Aug 2009**

Deakin Estate Merlot 2007



“soft, round and approachable “

From its base at Red Cliffs on the Murray-Darling, Deakin has produced this soft, round and approachable merlot with texture that is almost velvety and a pleasant, easy finish.

Peter Forrestal, Quaff, 2010