

Names to look for, old and new, in WA

2 Jan 2007 by Roger Jones

Just spent the last seven days living and working with the heart and soul of Margaret River and more importantly the outer areas of this now rich and prosperous region.

High on the list as a new dynamic region is Pemberton, led by Dr Bill and Sandra Pannell at **Picardy**. Bill has an obsessive passion for producing the finest Pinot, with the notion that the letter P is the key, ie Pinot, Pannell, Picardy, Pemberton And believes all great wines start with P. This retired doctor is not such a fool, he founded Moss Wood!

The founders of Margaret River are much documented, but this original band of prospectors have certainly flourished. Vanya Cullen, daughter of Dr and Di Cullen, now runs **Cullen**, sings great opera in the early hours, and has a sister Shelley who married Dr Mike Peterkin. Mike worked under Di Cullen to invent the now famous Margaret River staple SemSauv white blend in 1979.

Mike then set up **Pierro** (recognised as making MR's best Chardonnay, even above the much-acclaimed Leeuwin Art Series). This original venture was backed by Peter Thompson (heart specialist) who has recently set up his own super premium **Thompson Estate** with his wife Jane. Are you still with me?

Then we have David Hohnen, founder of **Cape Mentelle** and **Cloudy Bay** who is now engrossed fully in real farming, rare breed lamb and wild Aussie pigs. His brilliance in marketing ensures that these stunning products are sold out in every outlet. However wine is still in his system and he has set up the new **McHenry Hohnen** label run by his lovely daughter Freya.

Freya went to the same class as Ben Glaetzer at Roseworthy, and her partner Ryan is a winemaker at **Flying Fish** in Margaret River. Ryan, a true Aussie, combines rock climbing and making his own Brie style cheese in his kitchen at home with winemaking. The McHenry Hohnen wines excel in the 3 Amigos range; the exquisite white is a blend of Marsanne, Roussanne, and Chardy.

So now we go east along the Southern Coast of Western Australia past Pemberton to the area known as The Great Southern, once known for a short time as The Rainbow State. Here we have an area that produces Pouilly Fumé (for want for a better word) of extreme quality. This more elegant style of Sauvignon Blanc is a real winner. Not to be outdone, the clean, crisp, very soft Chardonnay which is Grand Cru Chablis or white Morey in style is a pleasant surprise. There is no question that this area; Denmark, Frankland, Albany and Mount Barker is currently the bargain of premium wines in Aus. Many of these grapes are exported not only to Margaret River but all over Australia to make premium wines. For years **Domaine Chandon** have bought up the Chardonnay grapes from here for their Yarra Valley sparkling wine. However Riesling is one of the main premium wines of the area, with Merv and Judy Lang of **Alkoomi** as one of the main pioneers from the late 1970s.

New wineries to look out for:

Margaret River

Thompson Estate
Edwards

Pemberton

Merum

Frankland River

Old Kent River

Denmark

Harewood Estate
West Cape Howe