Brian Croser and Santa Rita

8 Oct 2009 by Jancis Robinson

Australians may be surprised to learn that such a senior figure in their wine industry as Brian Croser has accepted the invitation of one of Chile's largest wine companies Santa Rita, who lost the head of the company, Ricardo Claro, suddenly quite recently, to advise them on wines and winemaking. This comes at a time when the Australian wine industry is feeling particularly vulnerable from competition from other southern hemisphere wine producers with lower production costs and fewer climatological challenges. Here is Croser's explanation, sent a few hours ago from his vineyard in the Willamette Valley:

We are in Oregon in perfect autumn weather. Picking the Riesling Saturday before the rain comes on Tuesday.

I am fascinated by the matrix of climate and geologically-driven terroir possibilities in Chile (illuminated during Andew Jefford's and my terroir tour in 2005) and we (Ann and I) both enjoy the country very much.

I have been talking to Santa Rita for three years but Patrick Valette deservedly was offered the consultancy which eventually didn't work out. Santa Rita have vineyards in a cross-section of Chile's terroir diversity and need some externally-applied focus to optimise their quality opportunity. I like the management, Anibal Ariztia and Andres Illibaca, so it all fits as a later career challenge.

I don't need the work but there is a challenge there and room to make a difference with people and in a country I enjoy.