

NEWS

Back to the future in WA

Matt Swinney, one of the largest grapegrowers in the Great Southern region of Western Australia, is reverting to something old to create something new and embracing the viticultural ethos of the Old World by developing bush vines on his property in Frankland River.

“We have large modern vineyards supplying quality fruit to Constellation and others, but we also have a management team that it is dedicated to extracting the best possible fruit quality from each site and to trying to deliver something a bit special. We feel bush vines help us do this and have a role to play even on a modern vineyard,” Matt said.

“We grow varieties like Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier and Shiraz up and down the slopes on trellising systems. But on the top of the hills, often where it can be very hard and rocky, we have small areas of Grenache and Mourvedre growing as bush vines. These varieties particularly seem to thrive in these conditions and do really well as bush vines—which of course should be no surprise given how well they do in similar conditions in the Rhône Valley and parts of Spain. The quality and character of the fruit these vines are already producing is encouraging.”

As one of the few people growing bush vines commercially in WA, Matt has faced the challenge of trying to find the expertise



Tim O'Callaghan pruning bush vines in Frankland River.

to help train these vines into their famous goblet shape. “Because there is practically no one else growing bush vines in WA it’s been hard to find experienced viticultural advice and impossible to find experienced pruners—therefore we have had to look much further afield,” he said.

And that search found the man who has spent all his life among bush vines and has worked in some of the oldest vineyards on the planet—Tim O'Callaghan, a fourth generation grapegrower from the Barossa Valley whose family owns Rockford.

Matt sees the application of these ancient methods as a bold new direction for the region.

Competition for Langton's

Australian independent auction house MW Wines has launched a new classification system of Australia's Top 100 wines in ‘competition’ to the longstanding Langton's Classification.

Woolworths bought Langton's earlier this year leading to much speculation about the future independence of the Langton's Classification of 101 wines first released in 1991.

MW Wines says it has spent two years of “intense research” reviewing a number of different classification models before coming up with what it thinks is a “modern, innovative categorisation system that is non subjective and utilises a pricing model of consumer demand to develop a method of ranking Australian wines”.

MW Wines is owned by Joseph Miceli and Robert Worthington who have both been involved with the liquor industry for many decades.

Worthington said, “We have created this system to be a truly independent reference tool for consumers and all stakeholders involved in the wine industry. We anticipate that all wine drinkers will benefit from an annually revised list which provides a clear and up-to-date picture of Australia's greatest wines, categorised into their respective major grape varieties.”

MW Wines has operated in Melbourne for nearly a decade, combining its expertise in running online auctions with climate controlled wine storage and its Museum Wine Shop, which specialises in supplying older vintages of super premium wines on both a trade and retail level.

• See the 100 wines at www.awbm.com.au/news

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