

YANGARRA

ESTATE VINEYARD



PETER FRASER

WINEMAKER AND MANAGER, DRIVING
FORCE BEHIND YANGARRA SINCE 2000

When it comes to winemaking philosophy, Peter believes it is about preserving the essential taste of the vineyard: he knows that intelligent viticulture is the key to creating great wines. To that end, Peter uses traditional winemaking methods including pre-soaks, indigenous yeast, open-top fermentations, hand punch downs, barrel fermentations, delestage (rack and return), and a variety of other labour-intensive techniques to create wines that are lush, balanced and specific to their terroir.

"I'm not interested in numbers on a piece of laboratory paper," says Peter, "I'm interested in flavour." This is where his winemaking starts. Striding up and down the vine rows on The Beach, the old wind-blown sand dune that is the backbone of Yangarra. Tasting berries. Checking the dryness and flavours of their tannins, the crunchiness of their pips, the lusciousness of their sugars, the cleansing astringency of their acids. The balance of all these.

"I suppose you'd call my approach traditional," Fraser continues, "but I can only confidently do it this way after learning all the white coat stuff. You know, understanding how it all works and why this old way is the better technique. You've gotta be spot on to get the kinds of flavours we want in the Yangarra Estate bottle. So you need a scientific background, then a fair bit of intelligence, experience, and bravery to let nature have her way."

The grapes are picked, gently crushed, and pumped into traditional open fermenters with their skins. He lets wild yeasts from the vineyard and the winery air conduct the fermentation, and he lets things take their own sweet time, never pushing ferments simply to clear the tank for another batch. Peter says:

"I prefer the best aged barrels. The trick is to train up your new barrels on wines which will not be too overwhelmed by those fresh oak flavours, then blend that with the better wines from the older, more seasoned barrels so you get a more wholesome, less sappy wine...and you keep the best of your used barrels for your very best wine."

"A little oxidation never goes astray," he continues, "so I'm not as rigorous as most at keeping all my barrels brimming and free of oxygen."

All this is very simple. The complex, and the clever bit kicks in when you get down to Peter's batch management.

Right from the start, in the vineyard, with viticulturer Michael Lane, Peter tasted those grapes according to the age of the vines and the tiniest variance in the soil types. Together, they have learned the flavours of the soils, and are constantly searching for new clues as to how certain soils impart their characteristics to the finished wines.

The fruit from the grey to white sands at the very crest of the dune, for example, is always the very best. From there down through the rest of the vineyard, it's a matter of keeping the batches discrete until they've revealed their true nature with fermentation and barrel maturation, then blending these batches to harmonise and reinforce, or to counteract and contrast each other to the greatest gastronomic advantage.

Peter has logged thousands of hours in the cellars and vineyards of Australia, Spain, France and the U.S. Prior to joining Yangarra Estate Vineyard, Peter made wine at St. Hallett in the Barossa Valley and Normans Wines, Clarendon. At Normans, Peter won the 2002 Winestate Wine of the Year for his 1998 Chais Clarendon Shiraz. His 2001 Yangarra Estate Shiraz and 2004 Cadenzia were both included in the Wine Spectator Top 100. In 2003 Peter was one of the finalists for the Australian Wine Society Young Winemaker of the Year. In 2005 and 2006 (under Peter's direction) Yangarra Estate wines won International Winery of the Year from Wine & Spirits.