



Triple Crown

Phillip White pays a visit to three of his favorite South Australian vineyards and is pleased with what he discovers.

In the midst of all the horror of the river running dry and the drought and whatnot, I spent last week in three favourite vineyards where all was confident and cool, and business is expanding.

All three are famously distinctive, for very different reasons. Their successes are due to some uncommonly intelligent planning and consideration, a lot of very hard work, and not a small dollop of luck.

Jess Jackson, a winery owner from the United States, began looking around for Australian property in 2000. He hired winemaker Peter Fraser later that year and in 2001 bought Lalla Rookh, a 420-acre farm near Kangarilla.

He changed the name to Yangarra, which means “from the earth,” and got on with it. Jess is a grenache tragic, and the 40 acres of 1946 model grenache bushvines were irresistible. There was old Shiraz, too. And some odd sods, cabernet, chardonnay and merlot.

The other huge attraction was the sand: a 60-million-year old dune, from black through grey to almost white, it's called Blewett Springs Sand, or Maslin Sand. It's not marine, but the remnants of the mighty mountain range that has weathered down to become the South Mount Lofty Ranges. It mysteriously produces wine that tastes tantalisingly of peat. This is one of this state's great vineyards.

With ace green thumb Michael Lane, Fraser has set about planting 100 acres of new bushvines, which is probably unique in the world. There's marsanne and roussanne, too, and cinsault, carignan, mourvedre and graciano. I can't think of any McLaren Vale white that is the equal to the first Yangarra roussanne.

Yangarra...is rare, particularly in McLaren Vale, for releasing only 100 percent estate-grown fruit. Until now, most of the larger Vales brands have always been blended from vineyards across the district.

Of the larger holdings, Yangarra is probably the only one to remain true to its distinctive soil. And why wouldn't you?

- The Independent Weekly, November 2007