

DANDELION WINES

By Paul Foster

They talk terms like *terroir* and *artisan winemaking* on the Dandelion Vineyards website. *Terroir* is something you see increasingly claimed for Australian wines but *artisan* is something relatively recent, so a taste test was called for. Might the Dandelion Vineyards *Wonderland* Riesling show particular site-specific qualities (*terroir*) and would there be some sort of rustic (*artisan*) quality in their *Pride of the Fleurieu Peninsula* Cabernet.

First a few background facts.

Dandelion's *Wonderland* vineyard is in the Eden Valley. It's formed from several side-by-side strips on the slope of a weathered ridge and sits at 460m. Its soils are an unfertile mix and there's plenty of rock, the same rock that made the nearby *Steingarten* vineyard famous. The vines hardly flourish and work hard to survive but have managed for 100 years. Almost as remarkable is the fact that one man, Colin Krohen, has tended them for the last 67 of their lives, and his.

And the *Pride of the Fleurieu* Cabernet? Well, they've definitely done something different and have used a technique that is hardly standard in Australia. They've chosen to raise a selection of bunches before crushing and fermenting them with the main crop. They picked the fruit about a month earlier than the rest and laid it out in trays. In this case, plastic *Tip Top* trays, I'm told. In the dry heat of the winery raising occurs; it's the same way that the Amarone wines of northern Italy have been made for generations and the process intensifies and modifies flavour. Interestingly, it results in a red that tastes particularly dry.

The Dandelion Vineyards venture is itself quite new but caught attention from word go. It is a partnership of three families and they source parcels of quality fruit from established vineyards in six South Australian regions. The group boasts vignerons Carl Lindner and Brad Rey and includes wine enthusiast Zar Brooks, who calls himself company typist. His wife, Elena, is the winemaker.

Dandelion Vineyards

Wonderland of the Eden Valley

Riesling 2010

Superb Eden wine, fine intense and fresh. And, yes, there's slate and mineral. Grapefruit, lemon and lime in a long, poised palate. Well away from the softer flowery style of warmer sites. Trophy, Brisbane. \$18

Dandelion Vineyards

Pride of the Fleurieu Peninsula

Cabernet Sauvignon 2007

Complex, different. Black and red berry fruit flavours with a dusty fruitcake character. Mushroom, too, and some cedary oak. Soft, mouth-filling middle palate. Then ripe skin tannins provide a firm finish. \$19