

MOPPITY

By Paul Foster

'It's the accountant in me,' Jason Brown says. 'It had to be a venture large enough to be a commercial success. A real business; not some romantic notion of swanning down lines of vines sipping from a glass of Chardonnay.'

Serious sounding stuff, Jason, and it seems to have paid off. From the 170ha. of vineyards that now comprises Jason's *Moppity Vineyards* in the Hilltops region of New South Wales came the fruit to make the wine that was recently judged Best Shiraz at the London Wine Show. That's the largest wine show in the world, that last year attracted 1,000 entries from Australia alone, and which happened to be the show at which Penfolds *Grange* won its first international award back in 1953.

Jason once toiled as an auditor at KPMG in Canberra. That was until 2004 when he made his V Change (that's as opposed to yours' or my Sea Change or Tree Change). But he confesses to having been 'interested' in wine and 'hanging around vineyards' as early as the age of 18. Then in 1998, when travelling through Coonawarra wine country, he experienced one of those life-changing moments and determined to enter the industry. The idea fermented away until, with wife Alecia who is also a member of the Institute and used to work with KPMG, he started looking seriously at vineyards.

The vineyard they chose was a large one near Young. It had been planted in 1973 and boasted mature vines but had never made a profit. 'In fact, we rescued it from the Receivers,' Jason says. It enjoys what might be a perfect climate, cool enough at 600m. for

its wines to have genuine structure but warm enough during the day in the ripening period to get fruit with serious flavours. Keep your eyes peeled for *Moppity* and not just the Shiraz. They grow Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot as well as a couple of hectares of the top Italian variety, Sangiovese.

Moppity Reserve Hilltops Shiraz 2006

Extraordinarily dense purple colour. Sweet blackberry nose; some smokey oak. Flavours of black and blue fruits with chocolate and jam, together. This is rich and round and muscular stuff (clearly a wine that works out at the gym) while smooth as smooth and exquisitely textured. It's full bodied and alcoholic and has soft ripe tannins. 5% Viognier, co-fermented. 3 Gold, 2 Silver, 1 Bronze. About \$39.

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