

## RIESLINGS

By Paul Foster

The wrath of a leading producer once came my way when I publicly said something silly. I advised an audience to search for wines with P on the label when looking for classy Clare Riesling, 'Pikes, Paulett, Petaluma and anything with Polish Hill.'

Next day a letter hit my desk. 'Should we alter our name from Taylors to Paylors,' it asked. Chastised, I sent an apology for any offence to Taylor's, the Valley's largest vineyard holder and producer of the beautiful St Andrews Riesling, at the same time thinking of the twenty or so other producers I'd possibly offended.

The truth is that the Clare is the source of more than a few of Australia's top Rieslings. They are elegant, definitely aristocratic, wines of world class that display an individual identity, typically tense and seemingly steely with dry positive palates of lime/apple fruit flavours and exceptional length.

The Eden Valley, that's a ridge some 500 metres high that forms the eastern side of the Barossa, has ever been the Clare's rival for quality Riesling. Its wines are generally gentler fruitier and more floral, and the Pewsey Valley range and Henschke's fabulous Julius wine have been pivotal for me in appreciating the style. I confess that as often as I think I prefer the Clare I find myself once more madly in love with the wines of the Eden.

More recently, the regions of South Western Australia and Tasmania are capturing attention. Their wines have their own identities but share common cool-climate characteristics, often

displaying tropical fruit complexities in the grapefruit flavours of taut, acid palates. They are quite different from their South Australian cousins and the Tasmanian style tends to the European with an element of sweetness in a crisp finish. Two of my WA favourite producers are Judi Cullam's Frankland Estate, with its individual-vineyard wines, and Howard Park with its own and Mad Fish labels.

**Pikes Clare Valley *Traditionale* Riesling 2008**

Keen, racy and linear, a very Clare Valley wine. Lemon lime fruit flavours with a minerally steely backbone. A juicy softness, nevertheless. Dry.

**Mad Fish Western Australian Riesling 2007**

Howard Park has operations in the Margaret River and Denmark districts of the South West. Strong grapefruit with exotic tropical fruit factors. Positive acidity, subtle sweetness. Value.