

Tyrrell's - Family Reserve Wines

By Paul Foster

Take Bruce Tyrrell's word for it, a new age of Semillon has dawned. And take my word for it, Tyrrell's is the leading light in it. The family has grown Semillon in the Hunter since early days and Tyrrell's Vat 1 is world famous. But it's the Tyrrell's single vineyard Semillons - the likes of its Stevens and the Belford wines - that are setting the present pace. Release after release is outstanding.

In a recent chat with Bruce Tyrrell conversation went to these wines. The Stevens vineyard, he revealed, has a block that predates 1900. This was news to me; I'd never known Semillon of such age grew anywhere. 'They're healthy vines, still yielding' he can boast. 'People forget that the Hunter and Barossa are the two of the world's rare repositories of original European stock.'

Bruce has been busy dating the vines to which Tyrrell's has access and is working back from 1968 when new-age plantings began in the Valley. The Belford vineyard, he points out, has a direct connection with James Busby, the settler who'd gone back in 1832 to take vines from European vineyards. Two of his nephews, it seems, married two of Bruce's great-aunts. And while Tyrrell's has access to Mount Pleasant Pinot Noir dating from 1921 their 4 acre Ashmans vineyard has Shiraz planted in 1869.

It's a fair conclusion, then, that vine age has something to do with the quality of Tyrrell's products. Even so, good wine is the mark of the whole Tyrrell's range and these are two to prove it.

Tyrrell's Family Reserve Hunter Valley Semillon 2002

Exquisite; a true bargain. Classic HV Semillon, just taking on signs of maturity. Honey hints in apple lemon and straw. Keen, dry, vital. Wonderful palate length. \$15.99 The Wine Society.

Tyrrell's Family Reserve McLaren Vale Shiraz 2007

Rich, intense, mocha and dark fruit flavours. Charred oak, too. The tannins are moderate and the finish is soft. From the Tyrrell's Rufus Stone vineyard. \$15.99 The Wine Society.

