

BAROSSA WINEMAKERS

MEDIA RELEASE

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GRANDPA BILLY RETURNS AFTER A YEAR OFF

Barossa winery Thorn-Clarke has recently released the 2004 vintage of its flagship wine, William Randell Shiraz. The release has added significance this year as the winery did not release a 2003 vintage of the highly acclaimed and sort after wine.

The wine, affectionately referred to as Grandpa Billy, is named after the Clarke's family ancestor William Randell who was an iconic figure in South Australia way back in the 1850's. A true pioneer, he designed, crafted and sailed Australia's first paddle steamer on the Murray River.

Fruit from the wine is sourced mainly from the company's Kabinige vineyard near Tanunda. This vineyard has produced extraordinary quality fruit now for some time. The Bay of Biscay soils in this area combined with the superb mediteranean climate of the Barossa provide an excellent environment for growing grapes with highly concentrated flavour. Key to achieving the high concentration is keeping the water off the vines in summer so the vineyard yield is low and berry size small.

However in 2003 unseasonable rain across South Eastern Australia right before harvest in February caused the grapes to swell thus losing the concentration required for William Randell. The small amount of fruit that was of the required quality level was blended into Shotfire Ridge.

Sam Clarke, joint owner of Thorn-Clarke with the remainder of his immediate family said "At the time it was a tough decision not to produce our flagship but we will not compromise on quality at any level and there was just insufficient volume available to justify bottling the wine. In the end the small quantity that was diverted to Shotfire Ridge Shiraz definitely lifted that wine as evidenced by Wine Spectator rating it the 18th best wine in the world last year".

Sam also added "The fact that the 2003 was not available has heightened the interest in the brand as people realise we are all about maintaining or improving quality and that we are not prepared to compromise even if it means not releasing a wine"

The William Randell Shiraz receives the best treatment right through the viticultural and winemaking process.

Vineyard Manager Peter Wild previously spent a number of years with Penfolds managing the Kalimna and Koonunga vineyards at the North end of the Barossa. These vineyards contribute a significant portion of Grange each year so he has the intuitive ability to get the absolute best out of the vineyards.

To maximise colour and flavour without harsh extraction small open fermenters were used, some with heading down boards and others were pumped over twice a day. In addition to add complexity some of the ferment batches were finished off oak. Maturation then involves the wine spending 24 months in new French and American Hogsheads before being bottled. Individual barrel selection ensures the best blend is put together.

Winemaker Derek Fitzgerald said “The 2004 Vintage was warm to hot and resulted in the smallest berries I have ever seen. They were the size of baby peas! These conditions were perfect for producing fantastic full bodied reds with great power and richness. In addition, due to the nature of the 2004 vintage, with careful manipulation in the winery we were able to get great balance in the wine. The 2004 William Randall Shiraz has a lovely sublime mouthfeel and texture. And what about the length of that fruit!”

The wine is deep inky purple. The nose is complex with amazing lifted black fruits, liquorice and spicy chocolate oak. This intensity comes through the palate with powerful blackberry and ripe plum fruit with well integrated oak. The tannins are silky and combine with the fruit and oak to give generous mouth feel. The wine finishes with amazing length of fruit and sweet oak.

In summary the resultant wine is a smooth yet full bodied example of what the Barossa really can achieve.

**For images and more information, go to www.thornclarkewines.com.au
Images – click on “Trade only”. User name is thorn, password is clarke**

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