



EDITION #12

DISCOVER OUR BEST-KEPT SECRETS

MAY 2020

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF THE THOMSON FAMILY AT BEST'S WINES

2020 IS QUITE THE MILESTONE YEAR for the Thomson family, it being 100 years since the family took custodianship of Best's Wines. It's been a remarkable journey, with trials and tribulations along the way, with a shared commitment passed down through the generations to produce distinctive wines from our historic Great Western vineyards.

The Thomson family began making wine in Victoria in 1893, when Scottish-born William Thomson settled in Great Western and purchased a vineyard called St Andrews at Rhymney. Along with his son, Frederick Pinchon, they set about expanding the property into a productive winery and orchard. Seven years after purchasing the vineyard, William sold St Andrews to his son and returned to Melbourne, where he re-established himself as a caterer and a baker.

Frederick proved quite adept at viticulture, despite having no formal qualifications. In 1920, seven years after Henry Best's death, Frederick Thomson purchased Best's Great Western for £10,000. Times were tough, and sadly, in 1929, receivers were called in as the world

economic depression hit. But the Thomson spirit was strong and in 1930, Frederick, together with his son Eric (born Frederick Hamill) purchased a block of land at Lake Boga, 240km north of Great Western. The receiver had no success in selling Best's, so Frederick was offered the chance to buy back the property, which he did. After just one vintage, Best's returned to the hands of the Thomson family.

In 1944, Eric, with his wife Mary and son Viv, moved to Concongella, setting out to restore the Best's brand. Initially, Viv wasn't sure that he'd follow his family into wine, but in 1961, having studied agriculture at Roseworthy Agricultural College, he joined the family business. For more than 50 consecutive vintages, Viv and his family were the custodians of Best's historic vineyards and winemaking, with Viv becoming a well-respected luminary of the Australian wine industry in the process.

Today, his eldest son, Ben, is at the helm of Best's, with brother, Hamish (Bart), having returned to the family business in 2017. We're proud to remain family owned and operated, and retain the vision to make world-class wines from our special patch of dirt.



MAY 2020 EDITION

BART'S BLOCK SHIRAZ

98 POINTS FROM HALLIDAY!

IN THE EARLY 1960s, VIV THOMSON returned home from his overseas adventures and started working alongside his father in the vineyards. At that time, he found many of the older plantings were in poor condition. Understanding the significance of these historical vines, he set out to rectify the situation and, in 1966, some of the underperforming vineyards surrounding the homestead were replanted with cuttings from the original 1860s shiraz vines. These vines were renamed Bart's Block, as it was also the year that Viv's second son, Hamish (Bart) Thomson was born.

Bart's Block is particularly distinctive in character. The old, dry-grown shiraz vines are planted in alluvial granite soils with a bedrock of sandstone, possibly washed down thousands of years ago from old creek beds from the surrounding hills. These parcels of fruit often form the backbone of our Bin No. 0 Shiraz blend, with intense aromatics and concentrated fruit showing great flavours.

This year sees the release of a tiny parcel of 2017 Bart's Block Great Western Shiraz in honour of the Thomson family's 100-year custodianship of the vineyards. James Halliday was given a preview, awarding it 98 points in the *2020 Halliday Wine Companion*: "Fermented with 25% whole bunches, matured in French oak (20% new). The colour is brilliant crimson, deep but bright. Yes, there's fantastic fruit that's been handled with kid gloves and yes, it's got '17 written all over it with its dazzling red fruits and (almost unseen) acidity to protect its freshness."



Best's Wine Club members will be given the first opportunity to buy this distinguished wine, so keep an eye out for its release in July 2020.



Did you know? We also have a shiraz block affectionately known as Sparky's block. This impressive vineyard of heavily trunked vines sits along the Congella Creek and was planted as part of our expansion plans in 1970, the year the youngest Thomson brother, Marcus, was born.



VINTAGE 2020 WRAP-UP



2020 WILL CERTAINLY GO DOWN IN HISTORY as a vintage to remember! Unlike other Australian regions, we were fortunate to be unaffected by the smoke caused by the bushfires (mind you, we've had our fair share of fires in previous years!) and, while yields were down, the quality is looking superb.

Fortunately, frosts in late 2019 were controlled with the assistance of our friends at Grampians Helicopters, along with frost fans in certain parts of the vineyards. Despite the strong winds and cool weather prolonging

the onset, vintage 2020 was able to get under way in late February, and things drew to a close just after Easter.

Bunch sizes were slightly smaller than previous years, but the shiraz in particular is looking pristine. Our new Sugarloaf Vineyard in Great Western is proving able to give us lots more options to continue to refine our wines as we get to know the site in more detail.

We look forward to you tasting the fruits of our labour later in the year, when the white wines are released.

BEST'S RECIPES



COMFORT FOOD AT ITS BEST

Lamb Shanks

Chris Thomson still uses an old Pyrex 250ml cup measure that belonged to Grandma Thomson. Her tip? Before adding the wine, bring it to the boil (the alcohol evaporates!) and it will impart a more mellow flavour. Cook and enjoy this dish with Best's Bin No. 1 Shiraz.

INGREDIENTS

4 lamb shanks, trimmed	1-2 tbsp tomato paste
¼ cup plain flour, seasoned	1 sprig fresh rosemary
3-4 tbsp olive oil	2 sprigs fresh thyme
1 brown onion, roughly diced	1 fresh sage leaf or bay leaf
2 carrots, roughly diced	1 cup (250ml) red wine
1-2 small celery stalks, roughly diced	1 cup (250ml) chicken stock
4-8 garlic cloves, chopped	Finely chopped parsley and
400g crushed tomatoes (or 400g fresh tomatoes)	finely grated lemon rind
	Fluffy mashed potatoes or soft polenta, to serve

METHOD

Preheat oven to 180°C. Dust shanks in seasoned flour. Heat 1 tbsp olive oil in a heavy pan and cook shanks (in 2 batches if necessary) for 4-5 minutes or until browned all over. Remove shanks and set aside.

In same pan, heat remaining oil, then cook onion, carrot, celery and garlic until slightly caramelised. Add tomatoes, tomato paste and herbs and stir to combine. Remove from heat.

Place shanks and vegetables in a casserole just large enough to fit them snugly, then pour over the wine and enough stock to cover (add more stock if necessary). Cover with a lid and cook in oven for 2-2½ hours or until meat falls away from the bones. Stir occasionally, ensuring shanks are covered with liquid.

Season with salt and pepper, sprinkle with parsley and lemon rind, and serve with fluffy mashed potatoes or soft polenta.

Meet the BEST'S TEAM



JAMES KELLIE
Cellarhand

Born into a winemaking family, wine is in James' blood. His father was once the winemaker at Howard Park. In 2003, the family relocated to the Great Southern region in WA, where they purchased Harewood Estate. James joined the family business after completing high school, but went on hiatus for a few years, studying photography in Perth and sound engineering in Melbourne. He realised his passion was to make wine, though, so, after studying wine at Charles Sturt University in WA, he completed two vintages at home before making the move to Great Western to work at Best's.

Favourite Best's wine? 13 Acre Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon



OLIVER TODD
Cellar Door Sales

Oliver was born in Darwin to a household of artists and dogs travelling between the Northern Territory, country Victoria, Europe and Indonesia. After completing his VCE in Ararat, he spent his gap year at Shandong University in Jinan as a guest of the Chinese government by way of a scholarship. After significant experience working in Melbourne in luxury retail at Harrolds and RM Williams, Oliver returned to China to work in the prestigious Star Art Gallery in Beijing, where he honed his Mandarin language and sales skills. Now back in Ararat, he continues to study part-time, while his fluency in Chinese, his experience in retail and love of travelling leave him well equipped at the Best's cellar door.

Favourite Best's wine? Great Western Pinot Noir

THE BEST BEST'S

2017 THOMSON FAMILY SHIRAZ



PREDOMINANTLY produced from the 15 rows of Henry Best's original 1868 shiraz plantings, and only made in exceptional years, when the quality is second to none. We are most excited to release the 2017 Thomson Family Shiraz. The fruit is meticulously hand-harvested, selected and sorted, and only a limited number of cases are made. It will drink well now, but its potential is revealed over time, when cellared and brought out to

celebrate the good things in life. Taste it for yourself and understand why Langton's classifies this wine as "exceptional".

Winemaker Justin Purser notes that this wine is slightly closed at first, but then evolves and changes in the glass with layers of aroma, including red flowers, crushed pepperberries, fennel and dark cherry. The palate shows a cornucopia of fresh fruits with a seam of mouth-watering spice and fine-grained tannins knitting the wine together.



JAMES HALLIDAY WINE COMPANION

99 POINTS

"Hand-picked and sorted 1868 planting, 50% crushed, 45% whole berry, 5% whole bunch.

You'd stand up for royalty, and that's this wine. To use the spit bucket is lèse-majesté. Just savour it, drop by drop, as it magically finds its way down your throat. It's got the full rainbow of cool-grown shiraz flavours, a conjunction with a year made for it by Dionysus and, glory be, comes with a screwcap." Drink to 2067.

LOOK OUT FOR OTHER NEW RELEASES



2019 OLD VINE PINOT MEUNIER

Small in make, but big in reputation, the 2019 Old Vine Pinot

Meunier will be highly sought after. It originates from the oldest vines planted at our Congella vineyard, dating back to 1868.

Retail.....	\$100
Discovery Club.....	\$90
Magnum Club.....	\$85
Imperial Club.....	\$80

Available from May 2020

SPARKLING BEADS DELIGHT!

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Thomson Family at the helm of Best's Wines, we'll release a 2016 méthode traditionnelle made with the classic varieties chardonnay, pinot noir and pinot meunier! This will be one worth celebrating.

Did you know that when William Thomson arrived from Scotland in 1876, he started his career as a baker? He worked in Melbourne for many years at his own bakery and catering business in Flinders Street, then at another in Emerald Hill (now South Melbourne). In 1887, William was appointed caterer to the 1888 Great Colonial Exhibition. It was here that he was possibly first exposed to wine, piquing his interest to move to Great Western.





TUNE IN AND JOIN US FOR OUR VIRTUAL TASTINGS

You might not be able to come and visit us at the moment due to COVID-19, so we're bringing the wines to you! Tune into our Best's Facebook page as our winemakers and members of the Thomson family host a program of virtual tastings and events..



Learn more: facebook.com/Bestswines

We're very proud to announce that Best's cellar door received the 2020 *Gourmet Traveller WINE* Best Tasting Experience/Additional Experience award for the Grampians Henty region. Thank you to all our customers for your support. We look forward to being able to welcome our guests back again soon!



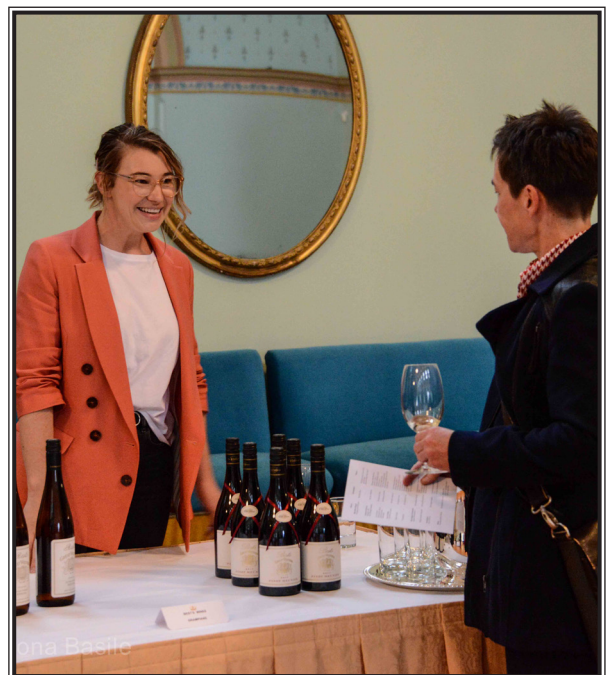
Women in Wine

BEST'S AT VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT HOUSE



WOMEN IN AUSTRALIAN WINE have been in the spotlight recently and in late 2019, our assistant winemaker, Brigitte Rodda, was invited to join a number of fellow Victorian female winemakers at a unique tasting at Government House. The Governor of Victoria, Linda Dessau, noted:

"Today, we see women who contribute so directly, bringing their skill and their talent to the art the science and the craft of this important industry. It's a great privilege for us to welcome each one of them. It will be a great joy for us to sample their wines as well. I'm sure a lot of wine has been drunk here over time, but I'm sure there has never been such a large gathering of women winemakers."



PICTURED ABOVE: BRIGITTE RODDA SERVING BEST'S WINES

SUSTAINABILITY AT BEST'S

SUSTAINABILITY has long been an objective here at Best's, and we're not resting on our laurels; we're committed to taking the best sustainable practices into the future. Here's an update of what we've done differently of late to meet the challenge.

SOLAR-POWERED ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY CONSUMPTION EFFICIENCY

Best's Wines has always been conservative in our energy consumption. The roof of Best's Great Western winery is fitted with a 390-panel, 95kWh system. Whatever electricity isn't used in the winery is fed back into the grid. Our most recently acquired vineyard, Sugarloaf Creek, boasts a 330-panel 99kWh system and, once again, the power we don't use is fed back into the grid.

WATER CONSERVATION AND MULCHING

The Best's Wines team constantly monitors our water usage across all areas of the winegrowing and winemaking process. Under the vines, we use a natural mulch, leaving the grass to grow. This helps to keep the roots cool and retain moisture in the ground.

At Sugarloaf Creek, we use 100% recycled water, which is supplied from Ararat through a special recycled pipeline in partnership with GWM Water. Our Congella Estate vineyards in Great Western and the Salvation Hills vineyard in Rhymney rely on dam water, which is only supplemented in the most severe conditions.



TREE-PLANTING AND BIODIVERSITY

To help prevent erosion at Best's Sugarloaf Creek vineyard site, we've planted 4500 trees and installed six kilometres of fencing. We have healthy populations of 'good bugs' including lacewings, ladybird beetles and orb-weaver spiders.

RECYCLING CARDBOARD AND SOFT PLASTICS

We've recently invested in a Recycle Pack machine to recycle our cardboard boxes into packing filler. The great benefit is that we can produce our own packaging from cardboard we're using already, and may well be able to supply other businesses with it, too. Plus, we've stopped using plastic bubble wrap for single-bottle transportation.

We are constantly working on new innovations to ensure we continue to care for our environment and operate a sustainable business as part of the broader community.

REGIONAL FOOD AND WINE, DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR

Our online store remains open 24/7 to keep you supplied with Best's wines in isolation. There are also some great local businesses in regional Victoria where you can still enjoy good food delivered to your door. Visit bestswines.com/blog for details.

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