

Best's
GREAT WESTERN
EST 1866

CONGONGELLA CHRONICLE

EDITION #14

DISCOVER OUR BEST-KEPT SECRETS

APRIL 2021

INAUGURAL OLD VINEYARD *OF* THE YEAR

For more than 150 years, we've proudly produced world-class wines in Victoria's Great Western region. Planted in 1868, the vines at our Congongella vineyard are some of the oldest surviving pre-phylloxera vines in the world. As our members know, our historic vineyards play a vital role in the fabric and flavour of Best's.

It has been an honour to be named the inaugural Old Vineyard of the Year in the 2021 Young Gun of Wine Vineyard of the Year Awards. This award celebrates wine at the source and aims to reconnect the wines we enjoy to the places and ways in which the grapes are grown.

The criteria evaluated vine health, quality of fruit and wine, innovation and sustainability and was judged by a panel of some of the finest wine minds in the country including Dr Irina Santiago-Brown, Dr Mardi Longbottom, Dr Mary Cole, Dr Peter Dry AM, Mark Walpole and Max Allen. From over 6000 grape growers across Australia, 50 finalists were selected for exemplifying the values of the awards. We were humbled to be recognised for the work that often goes on behind the scenes.

Sustainability is at the heart of these awards. The judges focused on vineyards engaging in meaningful change, such as those committed to improving vineyard health, who challenge accepted thinking about how grapes are produced, who inspire and encourage others, and who understand the intricate link between vineyards and the wider community.



We have a great community here in Great Western. Ben Thomson and the team continue to lovingly nurture these historic vineyards, tweaking practices to ensure their longevity for generations to come. Whilst it is never about the accolades, at Best's we're always humbled and proud when the significance of these historic vineyards is put in the spotlight. A rare Australian viticultural treasure.

VINTAGE 2021 UPDATE

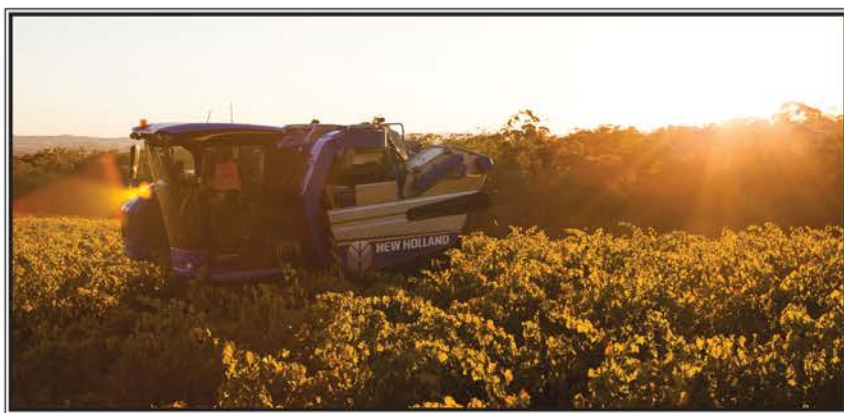
WHILE IT'S STILL too early to predict the outcome for this vintage, things are looking very promising. Our winemaker Justin Purser said it was the "best vintage he has seen at Best's in years" so be sure to keep an eye out for an update once the fruit is safely in the winery!

Decent rainfall in Spring and Summer over 2020 and 2021 have set the vines up perfectly. A mild summer with warm days and cool nights has provided exceptional ripening conditions. There is plenty of fruit and it is full of flavour.

With international borders closed we've had to rely on local talent this year. The exception to this is Belen, an experienced cellar hand from Argentina who has been working across Australia for the past year.

Fortunately, the sixth generation of the Thomson family, Isabelle Brady (Chris and Viv's granddaughter) joined the team for her first vintage, and Nicole Thomson's son Jackson has also jumped in to lend a hand. Hamish Thomson, fifth generation and Regional Sales Manager, is also helping out. The team are enthusiastic and raring to get on with the job.

The first fruit headed into the winery on February 24, with Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier destined for our sparkling white, followed by our Old Clone Pinot Noir. If all goes to plan, we may get a single vineyard wine from this block – the first time since 2017. We will keep you updated as vintage 2021 shapes up to be something special.



L-R: NOÉLIA ROMERO, JOEL SCHOTT, JOHN BICK (BACK), STEVEN MEIR, GORDON LITTLE, CODY STEPHENSON AND ELISH HEALY.

BEST'S WINES IN THE USA

Small parcels of our wines make their way to the USA each year through our American distributor, Little Peacock Imports. Based in New York, Little Peacock are a small family owned and operated company. Husband-and-wife team Gordon Little and Lauren Peacock are dedicated to showcasing some of the exceptional family-owned wineries we have here in Australia. We've worked with their team for a number of years, and our wines can now be found in 14 states across the United States of America!

Gordon says, "I'd known about Best's from growing up in Melbourne, and it's been so wonderful to be able to represent the winery here in the States. Not just the wines, but the people and the history too – to represent a historic storyline of Australia's wine industry. I particularly love the reactions to Best's Rieslings here. With so much focus on Germany and Austria for this varietal, sommeliers find there is so much to like in the style and quality of this grape in its Great Western expression."



Keen to find our wines in the USA? Visit Little Peacock's website little-peacock.com or get in touch with Gordon Little via email at gordon@little-peacock.com

BEST'S RECIPES



**PINOT NOIR BRAISED
Duck Legs**

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 brown onion,
roughly chopped | Finely grated zest and
juice of 2 oranges |
| 1 carrot, roughly chopped | 2 bay leaves |
| 1 celery stalk, roughly chopped | 4 duck marylands |
| 3 garlic cloves,
roughly chopped | 1 Tbsp olive oil |
| 250ml Best's Pinot Noir
150ml port | 80ml chicken stock |
| | Steamed peas and mashed
potato, to serve |

METHOD

Place onion, carrot, celery and garlic in a heavy-based saucepan with pinot, port, orange zest and juice, and bay leaves. Bring to the boil, then remove from heat and set aside to cool. Pour over duck legs in a bowl, cover and refrigerate overnight.

Preheat oven to 150°C. Drain the duck legs, reserving the marinade and vegetables separately. Pat duck dry with paper towel. Heat oil in a large ovenproof frypan over medium heat. Fry the duck legs for 3 minutes each side until golden. Remove duck from pan and set aside, then drain all but 1 tablespoon of fat.

Place the reserved vegetables in the frypan and cook for 4 minutes until golden. Add reserved marinade, stock and 250ml water and bring to the boil. Add the duck legs and cover with baking paper and then foil to keep in moisture. Place in oven and cook for 2 hours or until the duck is tender

Remove pan from oven and strain the cooking liquid through a fine sieve into a saucepan. Place the liquid over medium heat and simmer for 4 minutes until mixture has reduced to a thick sauce.

Serve the duck with the sauce, peas and mashed potato. Pairs beautifully with our 2020 Young Vine Pinot Meunier.

Meet the
BEST'S TEAM



ANTHONY JONES
Commercial Manager

Born and raised in Shepparton, Anthony studied a Bachelor of Business at Victoria University before becoming a Certified Public Accountant. He joined Brown Brothers in Milawa in 2000 and has been in the wine industry ever since. Four years at Brown Brothers were followed by three years at Rutherglen Estates. Anthony then moved to Melbourne to take up the role of Finance Manager at the Rathbone Wine Group (Yering Station, Mount Langi Ghiran and Xanadu Wines). After five years at Rathbone, he joined Best's as our Commercial Manager in 2012. When he's not working, he keeps active by going camping with family and friends, going for long walks, playing golf and taking his kids to sport practice.

Favourite Best's wine? White Gravels Hill Shiraz.



ISABELLE BRADY
2021 Vintage Crew, 6th Generation

Isabelle is the 6th generation of the Thomson family to enter the family business. Isabelle was born in Ararat and grew up on a farm in Rhymney. She is the daughter of Yvette and granddaughter of Chris and Viv. Isabelle attended school in Ararat until Year 9 then transferred to Ballarat Clarendon College as a boarder for her final years. Izzy is doing her first full vintage at Best's this year - a special moment to be taught the ropes by her grandfather, uncles and the rest of the Thomson Family.

Favourite Best's Wine? 2016 C.M.T Sparkling.



THE MAGIC OF MEUNIER

With the release of our 2020 Young Vine Pinot Meunier we thought we would take this opportunity to discuss this fascinating varietal and our historic Pinot Meunier vines. Pinot Meunier is one of the oldest grape varieties grown at Best's Great Western. Our original Pinot Meunier vines were planted in 1868, and our young vines were planted a little over a century later in 1971. While age is a relative term, grapevines over 35 years of age are often designated as 'old vines'. Therefore, the term 'young vine' is now a bit of a misnomer, as these vines will be turning 50 this year. These remarkable vines bring an immense depth to this wine, filling it with character and flavour.

Closely related to Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier is the third grape variety typically used in Champagne alongside Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Its name is derived from the fine white hairs on the underside of its leaves, which give it the appearance of having been dipped in flour – in French, meunier means miller – and for a long time, this varietal was called Miller's Burgundy.

Best's is one of the few wineries in the world to produce a single varietal Pinot Meunier. In 1967, just as our original vine plantings were turning 100 years old, Viv suggested to his father that Best's try making a straight Pinot Meunier. Following the success of our Old Vine Pinot Meunier, the first vintage of our Young Vine Pinot Meunier was released in 2010. Last year was an exceptional vintage for this fantastic varietal, and with careful cellaring this wine may be enjoyed to 2040 and beyond.



WHAT IS VALUE? REFLECTIONS FROM THE BEST VALUE WINERY OF THE YEAR

In 2020, Best's Great Western were awarded James Halliday's Best Value Winery of the Year in the 2021 Wine Companion.

We asked winemaker Justin Purser what this accolade meant to him and the team: "Our philosophy is to treat all of our grapes as if they come from the Thomson Family Vineyard. That means all of our grapes receive the best possible treatment in the vineyard and winery. Quality is our primary objective. Because whenever you buy a bottle of wine, no matter the price, you're ultimately looking for value."

NEW RELEASES



2020 YOUNG VINE PINOT MEUNIER

Beautifully perfumed with aromas of rose petals, cherry, garden mint and toasted nutmeg. The palate is refreshing and vibrant with sweet cherry pie alongside moreish savoury notes. A silky wine with a lengthy finish. Drinking well now, though it will also reward careful cellaring for 20 years or more.

Released.....	April 2021
Retail.....	\$35
Discovery Club	\$31.50
Magnum Club	\$29.75
Imperial Club	\$28



2020 GREAT WESTERN PINOT NOIR

Brilliant aromas of morello cherry, tamarillo, chamomile and sandalwood. The palate is equally vibrant with crunchy red fruits supported by a long and velvety tannin structure. The fruit for this wine comes from the 1980 and 1987 Pinot Noir plantings in the Congella vineyard at Best's Great Western, and the 1997 plantings at the elevated vineyard at Rhymney.

Released.....	March 2021
Retail.....	\$25
Discovery Club	\$22.50
Magnum Club	\$21.25
Imperial Club	\$20



2019 WHITE GRAVELS HILL SHIRAZ

A beautifully perfumed wine with aromas of violets, five spice, raspberries, fresh plums and cocoa nibs. Medium bodied but still light on its feet. Wonderful layers of spice and bright and fleshy red fruits are complemented by long and velvety tannins. The fruit for this wine was hand-picked, basket pressed and matured in French oak barriques in our underground cellars.

Released.....	March 2021
Retail.....	\$45
Discovery Club	\$40.50
Magnum Club	\$38.25
Imperial Club	\$36



Reflecting on 60

CONSECUTIVE VINTAGES



THERE ARE VERY FEW WINEMAKERS worldwide who can lay claim to being actively involved in sixty consecutive vintages at their family-owned winery. This year, Viv Thomson proudly holds that title. Although he has now stepped down from running the day-to-day operations at Best's, at vintage time you'll still find him helping out by driving the tractor, plunging ferments or imparting advice in the winery.

Viv joined the family business in 1961 and has witnessed many significant changes during his time. Australian wine was coming of age and was beginning to be discovered by the wine drinking public. Back then wines were not sold in cartons like they are today. Most sales were by the barrel that were then loaded onto a train and sent off to Melbourne.

The winemaking practices that the team employ today are vastly different to days gone by. Viv reflects how staff would ride their bikes the 12-kilometre journey from Stawell to work each day. Labour was manual, with most of the vineyard work still done by horses and dray and the picking all done by hand.

Work in the cellar was completed by candlelight, as electricity was limited. There was no refrigeration, no stainless steel for tanks, and all barrels were old. Fermentation was in the hands of the wine gods – laboratory equipment like pH meters available to test and monitor the wines were very limited. The basic rules emphasised the quality of the grapes coming into the winery and a strict adherence to cleanliness.

Times may have changed but Viv's passion for these unique vineyards remains steadfast. The wines we produce today will always have the Viv Thomson touch.

HISTORY LESSON

In 1975, Best's employed the first winemaker who was not a member of the Thomson family. The late Trevor Mast joined the team and worked for Best's for 12 years before starting local winery Mount Langi Ghiran!



— GET BEHIND THE VINES —
AND CHOOSE VICTORIAN WINE

BEHIND THE VINES IS A NEW INITIATIVE FROM WINE Victoria and the Victorian Government showcasing the “stunning diversity and depth of quality wines” available across our state. Together they’ve collated more than 500 Victorian wineries, and their interactive website encourages wine lovers to discover the stories behind the vines by exploring the five wine regions – Shiraz Central, Rutherglen, Yarra Valley, Pinot Coast, and King Valley Prosecco Road.

The Grampians region and our home of Great Western fall into Shiraz Central. Our region stretches from the north west of Melbourne and includes the rolling hills of the Macedon Ranges and Heathcote. From there, explore onwards to the Grampians, the Pyrenees, or the areas around the twin gold rush towns of Bendigo and Ballarat.

Behind the Vines was also created to be the definitive guide for buying Victorian wine. Designed to make selecting the right wine for any occasion as simple as possible – whether it’s online, at your local bottle shop, or at the cellar door. All you have to do is submit your preferences for style, taste, region, or winery facilities.

In the heart of Victoria’s Highlands, our distinctive cool-climate shiraz can be experienced through the wines of 250 wineries (and 120 cellar doors). Within the Grampians region there are 18 wineries waiting to be discovered. Jump online and see what’s on offer.

Learn more at vievines.com.au

Why not plan a road trip and visit Best’s Great Western Cellar Door? Take a self-guided tour of our underground cellars, enjoy a wine tasting and select your own cheese platter. **Learn more at bestswines.com/cellar-door**



MUSEUM WINE NIGHT

Our Museum Wine Night returns! Sample three of our museum wines and select your favourite to enjoy in full. There will be live music and cheese plates available for pre-order.

When:
 Saturday 17 July 2021
Where:
 Best’s Wines
 Cellar Door
Time:
 5–8pm

Entry \$20 – includes
 3 tastings from the
 Museum Wine List
 Cheese Plate
 (pre-order) \$35
 Museum wines by the
 glass from \$15–\$50

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