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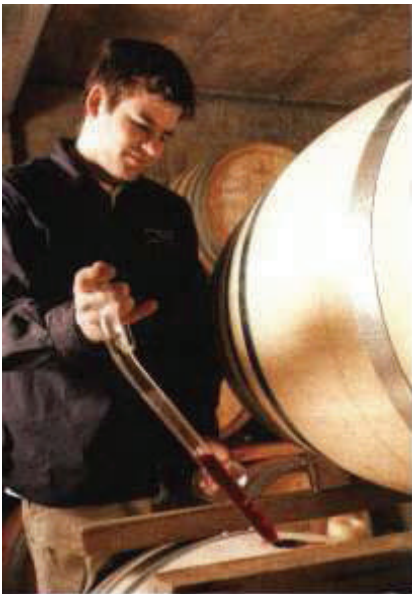
Barrels of fun
Simon Pratten has initiated significant changes since taking over management of Capel Vale from founder (and father) Peter.

Children of the revolution

Australia's winegrowers are passing on the viticulture mantle to the next generation with some innovative and impressive results, writes Max Allen.

It seems like such a good idea at the time. Plant a few vines, make some wine. But the thing about vines is they can live for an awfully long time. A century or more in some cases. Longer than most people. And the other thing about vines is that they keep squeezing out grapes. Every year. Which means somebody has to keep making those grapes into wine. Every year. Even when the people who planted the vines are long gone. The issue of succession is just as fraught in the wine industry as in any other agricultural sector. For the larger, older wine companies with generations of grape growing and winemaking behind them, there's always a worry that the next generation won't want to enter the family firm, forcing a sale to some faceless drinks multinational. And for the pioneers of the boutique wine boom of the 70s and 80s, now heading towards (or way past) 'retirement' age, the worry is that the kids might not share their parents' dream of being a vigneron. Indeed, growing up on the vineyard every weekend - pruning in the chill of early winter and picking in the heat of late summer - may well have turned them off wine for life. The good news, then, is that succession is taking place right across the wine industry - sometimes smooth, sometimes turbulent, but almost always taking the wine company in exciting new directions.

Among many of the old family firms, this new generation has a female face, which is a significant departure from the male-dominated traditions of the wine industry establishment. Eliza Brown, 32, took on the challenge of running her family's All Saints and St Leonard's vineyards in Victoria's Rutherglen with her siblings Angela and Nick following the sudden death of their father in a motorbike accident in 2005. In just two years, Brown has instigated many changes. "We're constantly looking at why we're doing things and reassessing how we do them; she says. "Take our great old fortified wines, for example. They're not necessarily wines that our generation - people in their twenties and thirties - want to drink, and we need to work out how to change the style without losing the tradition, to keep the history going.' So, as well as refining the Rutherglen styles of fortifieds and dry red durifs with young winemaker Dan Crane. and overseeing a re-branding of the family labels, Brown has helped launch the radically packaged Kid You Not range of modern north-east Victorian wines, aimed directly at her generation. Like Eliza Brown, whose initial career choice was the advertising industry, Christina Tulloch of Hunter Valley winery Tulloch admits wine wasn't always her



Ones to watch
 Clockwise from top:
 Rutherglen's Eliza Brown;
 Wilson Vineyard's Daniel
 Wilson; Christina Tulloch
 of Tulloch winery; Seville
 Estates' Dylan McMahon.



vocation. In 2001, when her father Jay "bought back the farm" from then owners Southcorp, Tulloch was working in publishing, after following her dad's advice to go out and find her own path in life. But a short stint filling in" at the cellar door in 2003 rekindled a love of her family's wine tradition, and the three-month stopgap soon turned into a full-time position as manager. A lot of it had to do with seeing Dad's pride in having the name back:' says Tulloch. "I realised a lot of people would kill to have our history, and we had an opportunity to make the most of that. I remembered growing up together with other wine families kids in the Hunter, riding on the harvester at vintage It was a very social industry. And I tell you what, working for a company with your name on the brand really gives you the motivation to get up every day."

Rob Wignall relished the prospect of taking over his family's vineyard in Albany, Western Australia, when the opportunity arose in 2004. First planted by Rob's parents in 1982, Wignalls had established itself as one of the leading vineyards in the region, but by the start of the new millennium it had lost some of its gloss.

"When the vineyard changed hands, it gave the kid - me - the opportunity to really sink his teeth in,' says Rob. "In every family, that's normal, I think. Sometimes you need to make changes. And since I've been running the show, it's been reminiscent of the old days when we were having fun.'

This attitude is reflected in the wines. Since Rob took over Wignalls, the quality and packaging has taken a big leap forward. But change can also evolve with first and second generations working together. Hunter and Elizabeth Smith, for example, haven't yet taken over from parents Barrie Smith and Judy Cullam at the 20-year-old Frankland Estate, also in the Great Southern region of Western Australia. But as they become more involved in running the vineyard and winery, they are implementing a number of changes, from the conversion to organic viticulture to the introduction of a bold, robust new wine, a 2005 shiraz cabernet stylistically quite different from Frankland Estate's traditional, elegant, reserved reds. And it's no coincidence, I think, that since Dr

More generation next

Yeringberg

In the Yarra Valley, a fourth-generation de Pury, Sandra, along with brother David, has helped parents Guill and Katherine expand the Yeringberg vineyard from two to 23 hectares.

Seville

One of the Yarra's pioneering 70s vineyards founded by Peter and Margaret McMahon, Seville Estate passed through a few hands before ending up with current owners Graham and Margaret Van der Meulen. The McMahons' grandson, Dylan, is now employed as the winemaker.

Angoves

In South Australia's riverland, fifth-generation Victoria Angove looks set to become the next managing director of Angoves.

Wilson

At the 30-year-old Wilson Vineyard in the Clare Valley, Daniel Wilson established his identity as a winemaker in 2001 by developing his own style of riesling - fuller and richer than his father John's classically austere Polish Hill River riesling - and still continues to make both styles each vintage.

Irvine

Since joining her father at Eden Valley merlot specialists Irvine Wines a few years ago, Joanne Irvine has introduced an award-winning zinfandel and an innovative albarino.

Rutherglen

Jen Pfeiffer is making her presence felt at her parents' 25-year-old winery, applying her experience from working in France's Beaujolais region to the planting of gamay, with lip-smacking results.



of the 30-year-old Capel Vale winery to his son, Simon in 2003, there has been a thrilling reinvention of the company, from a dramatic boost in wine quality to a complete overhaul of the labels.

Sometimes, though, succession isn't so smooth and involves a fair amount of creative compromise.

James Lance is the second generation from his family to be making wine in the Yarra Valley: his parents, David and Catherine, planted Diamond Valley Vineyards in 1976.

"The tricky bit with changing over, says Lance, "is that the older generation needs enough money from the company to live on in their retirement. And that's hard after only one generation of making wine'

The solution to that problem came in 2005 David de Pury and when Graeme Rathbone (brother of Yering Station owner Doug) bought the well-known Diamond Valley plans for Yarra Valley label - but not the vines and winery - and son James with wife Claire, leased the vineyard from his parents. It meant losing the name the family had spent 30 years establishing " but presented the opportunity to start afresh with now-mature vines.

The result is some seriously amazing wines - pinot noir in particular - under the Punch label.

'All through my teenage years and right up until I was 22," remembers Lance, I thought winemaking was way too hard a way to make a living. Then Dad got me back to do a vintage and I just became infected. It all clicked. Now I realise it doesn't matter how hard it is because I wouldn't be happy doing anything else."*

Among the vines David de Pury and sister Sandra have Big plans for Yarra Valley vineyard Yeringberg

