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Cover Image & Wine of the Year Awards Feature
Brendan Homan



FEATURES

32 GRUNER THE GREAT

Austrian star gruner veltliner is making giant inroads into the Australian wine market, writes Dan Traucki. Since Australia's first gruner vintage in 2009, 44 wineries nationwide are now bottling this cool-climate white. And to highlight gruner's emergence as a serious white, Winestate and the Australian Wine Marketing Board have collaborated to conduct the first Global Gruner Challenge. See page 32 for all the awards.

38 2018 VINTAGE REPORT AS GOOD AS IT GETS

Australia-wide, reports Charles Gent, grape growers have labelled the 2017-18 growing season as one of the best. Time and time again, growers used superlatives like "pearler," "a cracker" and "epic" to describe the fruit quality. From the northern Queensland Granite Belt to the cool Tasmanian hills, and from West to the Eastern Hunter region the industry is unanimous in its expectations for the vintage. And on the money side, expanding exports exceeding \$2.7 billion and grape prices up by an average 8 per cent, the industry looks set for a "purple patch."

49 WINE OF THE YEAR

SPECIAL WOYA FEATURE

The leading lights of 2018 - the wines, the makers and industry personalities - have been announced and now it's celebration time as we bring to you all their achievements in our special Winestate Annual Wine of the Year Awards.

THE YEAR IN THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR

183 SOUTH AUSTRALIA: ONE FOR THE AGES

Vintage 2018 was one of those years when things just fell into place, writes Karyn Foster. In the Riverland where decent rains haven't been seen for two years, irrigation, heavy mulching and "clever techniques" have produced better quality wines than ever. The Barossa's grapes came through two heat events to deliver generous flavoured whites and reds with heaps of varietal characters. In the Adelaide Hills growers have tagged the season one

of the "very best vintages in the last 10 years". McLaren Vale and Kangaroo Island each had "belter" seasons, and the Coonawarra's "superb conditions" led to an amazing vintage.

197 VICTORIA: FIGHTING BACK

Italian grape growers have again taken aim at the Australian industry - this time over nero d'avola, planted extensively in the Heathcote region - after failing in their attempt to stop prosecco growers using the term "prosecco", reports Jeni Port. Italians claim it's a protected geographical indication, while the Aussies counter that it's a grape variety and the Europeans are playing politics. And growers fear that this attack could continue as the Italians could claim any grape with a reference to a town or municipality could be targeted next.

205 NEW SOUTH WALES: HAPPY DAYS AS REDS AND WHITES DELIVER

The reds have been given a "nine out of 10" and the whites "a solid eight" in a state-wide assessment of vintage 2018, reports Rick Allen. The Hunter, Orange, Mudgee and Canberra regions battled dry conditions to deliver a vintage of promise. In the Hunter there's a real feeling of optimism. As one grower put it: "I think the 2018 vintage will be looked upon in years to come as a very serious vintage indeed for the Hunter."

213 WESTERN AUSTRALIA: RETURN OF THE GOOD TIMES

A mild summer and near-perfect growing conditions have Swan Valley producers claiming 2018 as "the best in 30 years," writes Mike Zekulich. The optimism is further fuelled by record wine export earnings pouring into the State. In Porongurup, Castle Rock's Robert Diletti described the season as: "It could not have been better. If I could dial up a vintage, this would be it."

218 NEW ZEALAND: QUENCHING A BIG THIRST

Wine exports continue to dominate the island nation's economy, reports Michael Cooper. They are now approaching \$NZ2 billion annually and are the fifth most valuable export commodity. And much of this is thanks to the insatiable demand from the US, where a fast-growing thirst for sauvignon blanc shows no signs of slowing. Around the world about five-million glasses of NZ wine is consumed daily, but while export demand is up, locals have cut back consumption - but only marginally.