

EISENSTONE WINES

Our passion is Barossa Shiraz

NIGEL HOPKINS

FOCUS - that is the key word at Eisenstone. Founder and winemaker, Stephen Cook, believes that focus is the foundation stone of superior quality winemaking. At a time when most Australian wineries are producing wine from quite a number of different grape varieties and different regions, Cook focuses on making the very best possible wine from one single region and one single variety, that is Barossa and Shiraz. Rather than spread his energies across several different varieties, he is totally focused on this world renowned combination.

Being based in the Barossa Valley, the selection of Shiraz as the grape to focus on was logical as well as practical. The Barossa is Australia's best known wine region, and its mega star is Shiraz (Syrah). Never having been affected by phylloxera as France and most of Europe was, the Barossa has many of the world's oldest Shiraz vines, some of which date back to before phylloxera forced Europe to completely re-plant all of their vineyards. Added to this is the fact that Shiraz is Australia's flagship wine variety, producing many of the country's best wines. So the combination of these two was the logical choice for Stephen Cook, ex-banker and corporate winemaker, to make when establishing his own boutique winery.

The winery name, Eisenstone, is the combination of the German word for iron "Eisen" and the English word "stone". This name was chosen to celebrate the ironstone soils in which their Shiraz vines grow, thus at the same time celebrating the English and German heritage and traditions of the Barossa.

Cook says, "with some of the oldest vines on the planet, the best of the Barossa Shiraz grapes which have the capacity to produce world-class wines, are highly sought after, closely guarded and extremely difficult to procure, even in small quantities". The older the vines are, the smaller the grapes



are, which means the more intense and concentrated are the flavours. This is, in part, the reason why most of the world's best wines are made from grapes grown on old or ancient vines.

He went on to say, "Through close personal contacts established during twenty plus years in the wine industry, I have obtained access to some of these select small parcels of what amounts to some of the best Shiraz grapes in the world. Thus, rather than being limited to one or perhaps even two vineyards to source grapes from, I am able to select grapes from a number of vineyards based on their performance during the vintage. Whilst maintaining this approach so as to source the very best Shiraz grapes possible each vintage, I am also locking in some of the more special vineyards, so as to ensure continuity of quality." One such vineyard was established in 1864 and will become the focus of a range of single vineyard wines to be released soon.

Cook said, "I have focused on Shiraz due to the fact that, as a region, the Barossa has a world-class grape resource of old vine planting material and history of winemaking. Our aim is to become recognised as specialists of Barossa Valley Shiraz, the variety for which the

Barossa Valley is lauded worldwide."

He went on to say, "I love the diversity of soils and microclimates in the Barossa region that give definite sub-regionality, enabling the same variety to be expressed in a number of ways, across the Barossa, each being quite distinctive."

Each and every one of the Eisenstone wines receives maturation time in a combination of new and one year old American and French barrels. Cook said "the ideal combination we are striving for is to use fifty percent new French oak, with the remainder being a mix of one year old American and French oak, as best suits each individual batch of wine."

By doing this, the wine is given an additional layer of structure, complexity and flavour. This oak regime means that in some of the younger Eisenstone wines, the oak may be apparent, however, with cellar maturation, the oak integrates with the rich, dense fruit flavours to create a silky-smooth, complex and balanced big bodied wine. Cook says, "The aim is to produce wines that are designed to be able to be matured for 15-20 years, whilst still being approachable and quite delicious upon release."

The existing range of wines will soon be enhanced with the addition of the 2017 Marananga Shiraz, to be followed around a year later by the 2018 Stockwell Shiraz.

The Eisenstone wine making philosophy is very straight forward, to produce the very best possible Shiraz wines from super premium quality grapes grown in some of the best micro-climates within the region which has become the "spiritual home" of the Shiraz grape variety – the Barossa Valley.

Cook has been successfully achieving his lofty "single region, single variety" ambition, with two 5 Star ratings in Australia's prestigious *Winestate* Magazine in 2018 and achieving the Top rating in the 2019 *Winestate* China Yearbook.

