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What's in a Grape?

An old world style regains popularity. CSL talks to one of the great wine-makers in Grenache today, Dave Powell of Torbreck.

BY SHIVANA MAHARAJ

WHY DO YOU THINK GRENACHE IS BECOMING SO POPULAR AGAIN?

Consumers have only recently come to the realization that the European wines they always enjoyed (Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Cannonau, Spanish Garnacha) were made from Grenache. This coincided with a greater appreciation for the variety on the part of winemakers around the world. Grenache works well with food, and it's a very flexible grape variety, lending itself to winemaking in a wide range of styles, from full-bodied reds from the Barossa to rosés in Tavel, and rare Grenache Blanc and Grenache Gris used to make white wines.

WHAT MAKES THE SOIL IN BAROSSA VALLEY (AUSTRALIA) SO IDEAL FOR THIS VARIETAL?

To make great wine, Grenache grapevines need to struggle. The Barossa Valley has the oldest soil on the planet. The limestone maintains acidity and minerality, and as the vines age they grow deeper into the ground, passing through limestone, clay, and eventually hitting bedrock. This gives the resulting wine a lot more character than what you'd find being made from grapes grown in young-vine vineyards whose roots don't go as deeply.

WHAT DIFFERENTIATES TORBRECK WINES FROM OTHERS MAKING GRENACHE?

Our focus is on creating handmade wines with purity, finesse, and elegance. We are not scientists, but grape growers and winemakers, so everything we do is geared toward emphasizing the sense of place that is unique to the Barossa Valley. I am very much influenced by the traditional European approach to winemaking. Vis-à-vis Torbreck's wines in context with European wines, our vigneron-centric approach is very similar to what you see in the Rhône, but the climate and soil in the Barossa is different from what you find in Côte-Rôtie or Châteauneuf-du-Pape. The Torbreck wines reflect the Australian terroir in the same way that the French wines reflect theirs.

OFTEN, GRENACHE IS BLENDED WITH OTHER REDS (SYRAH, CARIGNAN). WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO MAKE A 100% GRENACHE VARIETY?

We have both. Torbreck produces Grenache/Shiraz/Mataro blends (The Steading, Cuvée Juveniles) in addition to our single-vineyard release Les Amis. This particular vineyard was planted in 1901 but had been poorly maintained in the 1990s. After driving past it for a few years, >>



THE STEADING 2006

TASTING NOTES:

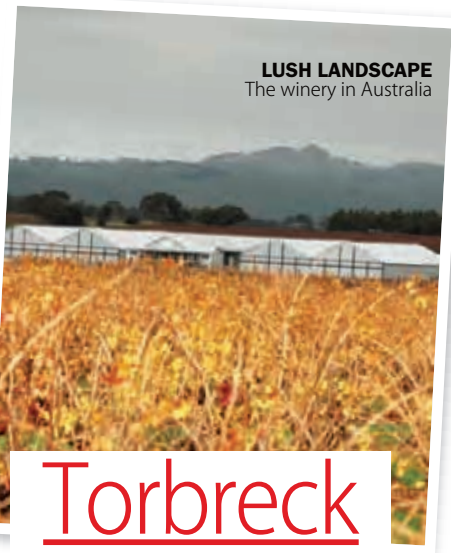
Named after a collection of barns, stables and outbuildings located on a highland farm, The Steading is deep red in colour with aromas ranging from truffle, raspberry cherry, and delicate notes of sweet floral, licorice and Provencal herbs. Cedar and smoky earth are perfectly balanced by acidity and supple tannins. The wine reminded some tasters of a great Burgundy, slightly sweet on the palette. A blend of Grenache, Mataro and Shiraz, and aged in French Hogsheads, the wine retains a strong character that would lend itself beautifully to further aging.

VARIETALS: Grenache (60%), Shiraz (20%) & Mataro (20%)

LES AMIS 2006

TASTING NOTES: Dense eggplant in colour, Les Amis is a lesson in precise and passionate wine making granted by the terroir — the soils of western Seppeltsfield, Australia. Perfumed with the dominant intensity of 'scorched earth' and oak, Les Amis is at its heart driven by Chinese five spice, anise, cherry, and raspberry balanced by smooth tannins. The hand harvested 100% Grenache was initially made for a friend of Powell, Ignatius Chan. "He asked me to make a wine for his renowned Singapore establishment. This unique parcel of Grenache, sourced from an old vineyard, has successfully endured eighteen months maturation in new French barrique." This elegant wine is one to savour for many years to come, and an excellent addition to a wine collection.

VARIETAL: 100% Grenache



LUSH LANDSCAPE
The winery in Australia

FOUNDED BY DAVID POWELL IN 1994, the winery is so called after the small Scottish town, **Torbreck**, where Powell worked as a lumberjack. Torbreck's roots are well-established in share-farming — using fruit from the very best vineyards in the Barossa Valley. Winemaker, **Dave Powell**'s production is heavily based on the classic Barossa Valley varietals of Shiraz, Grenache and Mataro an ode to Powell's own love for the wines of France's Rhone Valley. It is no wonder **Torbreck** wines are often compared to these varietals.

For the past two years, **Torbreck** has undertaken the production of whites like Viognier, Marsanne and Roussanne. Located in Lyndoch Australia (one of the original Barossa properties), **Torbreck** is situated amidst a native ecosystem that supports myriad flora and fauna. Eventually, Powell hopes to turn this into a nature reserve.

So what makes being a winemaker so fulfilling to **Powell**? "Unlike most producers of 'things', winemakers have a hand in virtually every aspect of their creation. We get involved in growing and maintaining the vines, processing the fruit, labeling, bottling, marketing, and finally selling the wine. As a winemaker we become part of the terroir, adding a sense of ourselves to every bottle leaving the winery. It's a very gratifying feeling, particularly when there's a sense of stewardship of the old vines and the **Barossa Valley** winemaking tradition is involved."

www.torbreck.com



RED WITH PASSION
Powell's love for Rhone-like flavours is palpable in his wine portfolio.

I talked with the owner and we worked a share-farming agreement. As the vineyard was rejuvenated, it became apparent that its grapes have such a special character to them that it made sense to bottle wine from the vineyard separately. I was also encouraged in this endeavor by my good friend Ignatius Chan, a restaurateur in Singapore. He suggested that Grenache of this quality would do well with a barrel regimen of new French oak and that if I would produce it, he'd order the entire production for his restaurant, Les Amis. In 2001, we produced the first Torbreck Les Amis. As the vineyard has come back to life we've been able to increase the production marginally but yields remain minuscule and I'm tremendously proud of the wine we make from this site.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE MEMORY WITH TORBRECK GRENACHE?

Having legendary oenologist/winemaker/consultant Philippe Cambie mention (during the recent Grenache Symposium) that Les Amis tasted as if it had been made just down the road in Châteauneuf-du-Pâpe. Another great memory was finding out the Francois Perrin of Chateau Beaucastel had tracked down and purchased a case of Les Amis after tasting it last year.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE FALL MEAL WITH TORBRECK GRENACHE?

Grenache has a beautiful symbiotic relationship with duck breast. This serendipity creates an amazing experience in terms of flavors, textures, and aromas. Grenache just seems to work in favor of everything. **CSL**

Torbreck is available in Calgary at Harvest Vintage Imports; www.harvestvintage.ca



CUVEE JUVENILES

2008


TASTING NOTES: "The owner of Juveniles wine bar in Paris, Tim Johnston, suggested that I make a wine for him. I decided that it should be a blend of Grenache, Mataro and Shiraz from our ancient vines. I asked Tim's daughter Carolyn, to design a separate label for this cuvee, as her paintings adorn the walls of her father's wine bar," recounts winemaker Dave Powell. This wine is like biting into fresh stone fruits, raspberry, cherry and strawberry—jammy, juicy and intense with bright acidity and Asian spice. Reminiscent of a Cote du Rhone, the unoaked Cuvee juveniles seems to intensify in fruitiness the day after opening. This is great wine to enjoy with your favourite fall roast. It beckons for the second bottle to be opened.

VARIETALS: Grenache (60%), Shiraz (20%) & Mataro (20%)

A herd of bison grazes amongst the grass in the Białowieża forest.



WHERE THE DEER AND THE BISON ROAM

A unique and herbacious vodka, from the pristine forests of Poland. Earthy, yet bright with floral notes, Żubrówka is a twist on tradition 

RESEMBLING THE PRIMEVAL FORESTS THAT COVERED THE European Plains thousands of years ago, **BIAŁOWIEŻA** in Poland was recognized as a biosphere reserve under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program in 1976. It is an untouched wilderness reserve, where hunting and the use of chemicals are prohibited. The forest is home to the largest European herd of bison attracted by the plentiful bison grass (*żubr*) that grows there. The pronounced ingredient in **Żubrówka vodka**, bison grass is a fragrant almond-vanilla scented grass that bears a thin layer of white powder underneath the leaves. The grass is picked in early summer, dried and spread on screens, where it is washed with ethyl alcohol to create the aromatic essence. It is then distilled under a double step production process, ultimately blended with rectified rye spirit and demineralized water. Each bottle is decorated by a single blade of bison grass, the symbol of authenticity and natural origin. Żubrówka, awarded several international spirit gold medals possesses a refined, decidedly herbaceous almost hay like aroma, with delicate sweet notes of spring flowers, lavender, and lingers with a vanilla and creamy almond finish to the palette. Alone, or mixed the vodka is a unique spirit sure to have your friends talking.

www.zubrowka.com



TWISTED SAGE

Elan Marks

Ingredients

2 oz. Żubrówka
 ½ oz. Elderflower cordial
 3-5 sage leaves

Method

In a shaker tin, tier 3-5 sage leaves. Add ½ oz. Elderflower cordial and briefly muddle to release the oils in the sage leaves. Add 2 oz. vodka, ice and shake well, double strain into your glass. Garnish with a lemon twist and a sprig of sage.

Store leftovers in **glass containers** (no stains or odour). / Choose **long lasting** cookware such as cast-iron. / Check **refrigerator seal** for wear. >