

It's a conversation, not a statement

What's in a name?

I know I'm not the first or last to struggle with this question, but really... who'd put themselves through this?

What on earth do you call a wine, a range, a brand?

How do you express what it is you're about and what you want to achieve? And when you do, how do you do it without sounding like a spin-doctor or a lab technician?

I love wines of all persuasions with flavour and generosity (even a good Chardonnay, although I promise I'll never make one). The Barossa is the best place in the world to make wines with big, rich, robust flavours, and it happens to be where I live. Shiraz, Mataro, and Grenache... even the Cabernet Sauvignon wines from here are beautiful, and Cabernet can be such a hard, bony creature.

But what do you call the wine?

Naming wine after the machines used to make it can be great – but it's been done before. The techniques?, done. The stars, the moon, the skies?

Some days it can be quite disheartening and you feel like there isn't a name that hasn't been used before.

And then inspiration strikes and you're a genius! The winery is on Murray Street. Simple! Almost every town between Adelaide and the mighty river Murray has a Murray Street. So in a doffing of the hat to the lifeblood of South Australia – we'll call it 'Murray Street Vineyards'.

Then when I select the better stuff from the collection of barrels and batches in our stunning, new, 150 yr old, stone barrel theatre (built 2003)..., we need another name!

The saga begins again. Do you use a new brand altogether? A new concept? A new theme?

No, not this time. 'Murray Street' is still appropriate, but there's a reason for the higher quality – the vineyard it comes from; the soil. It's what it is, that's what we'll call it.

So, for example, our Cabernet Sauvignon grows in the sands of Vine Vale - that's what makes it so very good, it's fair that we should pay homage to the earth: Vine Vale Cabernet Sauvignon.

Now we're getting there.

So our first releases have names, I hope you like the simplicity, and enjoy the wine.

The Dream

My wife Vanessa and I have dreamed of making our own wine since I spent my first vintage throwing grapes into a press at St Hallett. We both fell in love with the wine industry as a whole, and many of the individuals who work to make it all happen. People like Stuart Blackwell and Trevor Jones were friendly, approachable and informative even when they were heavily sleep deprived. They weren't afraid of sharing their talents and insight into the craft of winemaking – and I caught their bug.

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Of course I had no idea how to make our dream a reality, or how to make wine, but a vintage in Oregon gave me a chance to learn more about the craft of winemaking than I would dream of learning at college. Myron Redford, who owns Amity Vineyards where I worked, let me pick a few buckets of bird pecked old second crop Pinot Noir grapes and make some 'stuff'. Pink, sweet, and fortified with corn spirit, this was hardly legal and barely drinkable, but great fun to at least have a go.

*IT WAS
VINTAGE
FESTIVAL
1995 AND
THE DREAM
WAS ALIVE
AND WELL*

I gave a taste to Stuart and Trev on my return – warm from the car – and Trevor's silence was almost as diplomatic as Stuarts "Well done". They're still alive though, and I had something to improve on.

Another vintage at St Hallett, time in the cellars at Orlando and retail experience in Adelaide gave me a few more ideas about the good, bad and ugly of the industry.

Perhaps the single most influential person I've worked under is Robert O'Callaghan. I had nothing to do with the winemaking team at Rockford – I was in the tasting room, but his approach to the industry and how he structured his business was inspirational. Robert didn't try

to create a business full of corporate drones; the personalities of the employees in all areas were encouraged to shine through.

Robert's personality was (and is) written all over the place too. Spend a few minutes at Rockford and you know just what sort of person he is. His love of old stuff, wooden boats and wine is real and his trophies (not from wine shows) are everywhere. The wine's not bad either.

If a little of Robert's approach has rubbed off on me I'll be happy. I'm not into the same things he is, but if people can get to know me through my wine styles and the way I set things up it's no bad thing.

A stint at Torbreck gave me the amazing opportunity of working a vintage in France; Provence to be exact. What an amazing place. The water supply for Château de Roquefort (the winery I was working in) is from a spring in the side of the hill and is collected in a series of troughs built by the Romans! I could write tomes about Château de Roquefort and one day I probably will, but for now it will suffice to say I learned that, above all, that minimal intervention winemaking works to produce wines of very real character and the Appellation Controlee system has little to do with it. A detailed understanding of soil and

climate is important, but having the dedication and commitment to your vineyard flavours and a passion for what you're trying to achieve is far more important.

The Desire

So anyway, throughout all this, Vanessa and I wrote and refined business plans, models and concepts and showed them to anyone who would read them. We'd decided early on that we wanted a *human* to work with, not a bank. We've both seen what happens when you're in business with a bank and things get tough – they shut you down! At least with people you've got a chance of toughing things out if you keep them in the loop and work together. Most of our plans and ideas were 'pie in the sky', but one finally hit home and got some interest.

*SOMEHOW
WE WOULD
PRODUCE
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AND DESIRE
COME TRUE!*

Bill Jahnke is an American who is obsessed with wines. He rates wines with a register of their 'yum' factor and searches for real 'comfort wines'. He's also our partner and great friend.

Bill read our latest manifestation of a plan – 10 acres of old vines and a shed – and quickly came down to see what we were talking about.

Bill's a quiet man, and sometimes it's a bit hard to know what he's thinking. This occasion was one of those. He let me go through the whole idea with him, fill in some gaps and then go home. I had no idea if he thought I was barking mad or not.

We met again the following day and Bill told us that no, the concept wasn't any good for his purposes. Oh well, I thought, try again.

'But', he said, 'There's a block of land in Gomersal that we could look at.'

I think most winemakers have dreamed of growing grapes in Gomersal, but until recently there was no water to get things started. What's more, this property was one of the most beautiful spots on the Western ridge of the Barossa.

From the top of the hill you could (and can) see from Tanunda, down the Barossa ranges past Rowland Flat,

over Lyndoch to Mt Torrens, the edges of Gawler and Willaston, back up the Sturt Highway almost to Freeling. The Nain range stands proudly over Greenock and Seppeltsfield to the North and Gomersal Road slides past connecting the centre of the Barossa to the Sturt highway. Amazing!

And the soil is first class: There are areas of red clay over limestone, shale over weathered slate and deep sandy loams. Everything you could want. There are elevations facing all points on the compass and a gentle but constant breeze over the entire estate.

The trouble is, there was a bit too much for what we wanted. We spoke to Bill about what we could do and agreed that we could start with a small chunk of the crop for wine and sell the rest.

Now its for real and we're making a go of it our way, and I hope you'll join us for the ride.

Time to Devour

Recently my vineyard manager, James, and I went to a trade show. We saw tractors, planters, harvesters, crushers, testers, inflatable bags, pointy things, and things that go beep. I was impressed by the new technology and how much money could be spent on electronic toys, but it didn't quite make sense. There was something wrong. All this stuff was designed to analyse every part of the wine growing process, sort

and report on the most incredibly small and large parts of the business, and make money move from me to them...

I had lost James to a spray machine and found a pair of electronic snips: a pretty reasonable swap by all accounts, but when we re-met he said; 'You know, there are a lot of people here making a very simple process very complicated.'

There it is.

Making wine is one of the most simple and uncomplicated jobs of all.

Sure, it's a craft, you need to learn how to do it, but in reality we're doing something that was discovered by accident a long, long time ago. Long before wind shear sprayers, stainless steel, micro-oxygenation and spectrophotometers,

From the beginning I've been trying to find grapes that tell their own story. I've found a few, and there's more to come, but it's not my story. It's a story about the soil, the season, the variety of grape and the people who grow them. It's an experience that can evoke strong memories of happy times, and so it should.

Remember - It's a conversation, not a statement.

Andrew Seppelt
Winemaker

DEVOUR AND BE A PART OF OUR DREAM

Where to find us

I'm pretty keen to foster our mailing list - electronic and snail mail - as it's a great way of communicating with you about our activities. I'm not going to bombard people with rubbish, just a couple of updates per year and please; feel free to write back. I'd like to thank people for joining our mailing list too by offering wines at pre-release prices before they hit the shelves. The pre - release prices will only be offered to mailing list customers and the offers will be valid until Friday August 6. Special, tiny batch wines will be released only to the mailing list too, so its worthwhile staying on the list for some of those extra-special offerings.

In Australia, we're small enough that we can look after our own distribution interstate without an agent, but of course that means we won't always know every good quality retailer or restaurant in every location. I would like to have wine in top restaurants and independent retailers where possible, so if you have any suggestions, please let me know and I'll give them a call.

I'd really like to support independent retailers wherever possible. People that have real passion for wine, vineyards and the stories that go with them are getting more and more rare as the industry gets super competitive, but these people are standing tall and holding fast; they deserve our support so that they can prosper and maintain supplies of interesting, small volume products for us all to enjoy.

Once the murraystreet.com.au website is up and running - sometime in the near future, I'll maintain a list of our account clients so that you might support them too.

Internationally we're steadily building a network of distribution to make sure that most people can get some Murray Street. We're already servicing Denmark and the USA, and Canada looks likely in the near future. Again, we'll have contact details available on murraystreet.com.au, but you can give us a call if you are unsure.

MURRAY

v i n e y a r d s

STREET

We're open every day
10am until 4pm except
Good Friday,
Christmas Day,
New Years day and
'emergency' golf days!

The tasting room we've built in Greenock is a stunning place to start. I encourage you to find your way here to take a look, have a taste of wine and a coffee, and on most weekends we'll have cheese platters and nibbly bits for you.

The buildings have been built to match the town of Greenock; bluestone outbuildings and a rendered brick 'residence'. Of course Vanessa and I don't actually live at the winery – even though it feels like it at times – but the old home still has a residential feel to it, we didn't want the tasting room to feel like a shop.

We hire tasting room staff who have a genuine passion for the local area, wine and all things gastronomic. You'll have the opportunity of exploring the region with informed directions if you haven't been here before, and if you have, we will hopefully be able to help you find something new and delicious..

What's going on?

The very first 'Shiraz Alliance' is being held in August and has created a big buzz. Shiraz producers from around the world will converge on the Barossa for a celebration of all things Shiraz over four days. At the end of the program is the "International Cellar Door", which offers a chance for us to hold a very special tasting with Coriole of McLaren Vale.

We're putting our heads together on the Sunday (August 1) for a multi regional blend-up. I'm really very excited about this event, as it's truly unusual to be able to look at two wineries base wines, from different regions, together, and have a go at blending them yourself. As if that isn't enough, Mark McNamara of the 'Barossa Culinary Team' – national champions of the tucker bag is joining us to give his opinion of the wines and then prepare a meal to match them using produce from the Barossa Farmers Market!

The nitty gritty details about the Shiraz Alliance can be found at www.shirazalliance.com and if you'd like to be involved in "The Blender", give Sonia a call and she'll save a place for you.

Something I'd like to try is a 'Roving Tasting Room'.

I've an idea that since most people don't make it to the Barossa every year, I should make an effort to come to them. So what I plan on doing is going to towns, cities and countries, wherever our customers are, and catching up, in person, over a meal. I reckon if I bring the wine – something not yet released – and people cover their own meal costs, we can keep in

regular contact and I can get first hand feedback from people about the wines. Sort of moving the Mountain to Mohammed.

So, to try this out, I'll be in Melbourne on July 8 at Asiana Restaurant, Albert Park, and I'll bring our latest Shiraz, a bit of Grenache Mataro and a couple of Cabernet Sauvignon / Cabernet Franc blends I've been working on. Dinner is \$75.00 per person (food and wine inclusive). If you'd like to join me, please let me know by either phoning the office or e-mailing me on andrew@murraystreet.com.au.

For South Australian's on our mailing list, you can have the opportunity to taste the latest released wines and have dinner with us on Saturday July 24. We have places for 28 people to join us for this first dinner to be held in the Tasting Room. The cost for the evening is \$75.00 per head (food and wine inclusive). If you'd like to join us, please let us know by either phoning the office or e-mailing us on andrew@murraystreet.com.au.

Diary Dates

- Thursday July 8 - 7:00pm
Murray Street Dinner
at Asiana Restaurant, Albert Park, Melbourne
- Saturday July 24 - 7:00pm
Murray Street Dinner at
Murray Street Vineyards Tasting Room, Greenock
- Sunday August 1 - 4:30pm onwards
Shiraz Alliance Shiraz Blending and Dinner at
Murray Street Vineyards Tasting Room

Our Office Manager, Sonia Cheers, will be your first port of call if you contact the office. She can help you with most things, but if she's not sure, she'll find someone who can help you. Please go gently on her though, she's only here three days a week at the moment and we overload her every time she comes in. If you don't get a 'real person' first go, and the message machine answers, please leave a message and we'll call back as soon as possible, technology takes a while to get to Greenock, and even when it does, it usually doesn't work very well – the phone lines are no exception.