

Exotic heritage, modern expertise



There's a somewhat exotic ring to it - with more than a touch of the extraordinary. A sense of discovery and intrigue has given way to a palate heralding a rich extravagance of premium fruit and flavour.

Xabregas - pronounced "X-ab-regas" - is the site of a former Franciscan Monastery in Lisbon, Portugal, and there are links via the family of one of the founders to this site. In fact, it was the frugal and charitable Franciscans who inspired the Xabregas strategy to produce fine, premium wines and market them at very affordable prices.

Far from Portugal, the Xabregas vineyards were established in early 1996 - on 120 prime hectares, 10km from Mt Barker, in a joint venture led by stockbroking partners Terry Hogan and Eve Broadley. Smitten by the beauty of Mt Barker and the Great Southern landscape, they set out to develop a premium vineyard enterprise and make wine of exceptional quality. But it was their acquaintance with 'risk and endeavour' (inherited from their stockbroking experience) that patiently guided the 10 years it would take for the Xabregas vineyards to flourish into trophy-winning fruit and wines.

Xabregas is located in the centre of the Mt Barker sub-region, part of the Great Southern region. Like Margaret River, its prestigious south-western sister, Mt Barker has established a reputation as one of Australia's finest premium wine regions. With a cooler climate and maritime influence similar to that of Bordeaux, Mt Barker produces very high quality fruit of moderate to low yields per acre.

The Xabregas vineyard sites were carefully chosen after extensive research concluded that "the best vineyard growing environments of the Great Southern lie to the south of Mt Barker, corresponding to roughly 750mm annual rainfall". There are now three vineyards - Fig Tree Lane, The Spencer and Narrikup. White varieties planted are riesling, chardonnay and sauvignon blanc; and premium reds include cabernet sauvignon, along with cabernet franc, merlot and shiraz.

Initial production was limited to just 2800 cases, increasing in quality and quantity each year since, with the spectacular 2007 vintage (acclaimed as one of the best of all time) expected to yield over 15,000 cases. In addition to making Xabregas wines, the vineyards supply fruit on contract to some of the West's most outstanding wineries, including Goundrey, Harewood and Howard Park.

TROPHY-WINNING WINEMAKING

In 2004, the Xabregas partnership became the major shareholders in a nearby award-winning, premium winery now known as The Vintage Wineworks. Since the investment by Xabregas, the winery, under the stewardship of acclaimed chief winemaker Dr Diane Miller, has excelled, with over 140 show awards in recent years. These include a trophy and four gold, nine silver and 10 bronze medals at major shows throughout Australia, the UK and New Zealand for Xabregas Wines.

The winery processes over 885 tonnes of fruit per vintage, producing over 550,000 litres of premium Mt Barker and Great Southern appellation wines. The Barrel Room has room for 1000 French and American oak barriques - used to create the trophy-winning Show Reserve Shiraz and range of award-winning cabernet and chardonnay.



To create its acclaimed reds, Xabregas uses two world-renowned Ganimede fermenters (one of only two wineries in WA to do so). Costing more than twice the price of conventional equipment, these fermenters produce a more 'naturally' aromatic red wine - softer, with a richer, more intense colour - with a silky finish and intense fruit flavours. In Europe, the Metodo Ganimede is so highly regarded in wine circles that many wineries run an 'authorised' label on their bottles.

Xabregas winemakers use their talent, experience and technology to optimise the expression of the fruit and make wines with a true finesse - with each approachable and ready to drink early in their lives while also designed to cellar well, providing even greater enjoyment in the years to come.

The rewards of this dedication to premium viticulture and winemaking were recently celebrated with Xabregas Winery being the only WA winery selected by Austrade to exhibit alongside 10 other Australian wineries on its stand at the London International Wine & Spirits Fair. In addition, Xabregas is the only Mt Barker winery awarded a five-star rating in the *James Halliday Australian Wine Companion 2007*. Testimony in itself, really.

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