



by xabregas

The X Factor

WHEN MARTIN COOPER ARRIVED at Xabregas late last year to take over as senior winemaker he had two questions: Just how good was the 120ha of vineyard at his disposal and how the hell do you pronounce the name Xabregas.

To the first; he was pleasantly surprised overall, and especially delighted with some of the smaller blocks within the vineyards. To the second, he admits to still having, trouble saying the name, but says he remembers it because it sounds like a rather good soccer player, though I've never heard of him. For the record, Xabregas is pronounced Ex-a-bre-gas in four-four time. Maybe that isn't going to help you get it right, but it might lock the name in your mind.

Having personally mastered the name, I was more interested in the output of these vineyards, which is reflected in a new range of wines that will be hitting the shelves very soon, under the banner X by Xabregas. Look, if it is already causing you a problem then just say X.

Initially the wines released under the X brand were two positively stunning Rieslings, one dry and one sweet and cute. A shiraz is on the drawing board, along with a sauvignon blanc; both are due out next year. In a line-up of 40 odd Rieslings I assembled recently, these two new Rieslings stood out from the crowd.

Cooper also discovered that a lot of fruit was being used in the standard – and very good – white label Rieslings. When he saw the fruit coming in from the Figtree and Spencer vineyards, he started to see some special batches that he believed could be developed into single vineyard wines.

And while he realized the quality was exceptional and distinctive, he also noticed a fundamental difference between the two sites that would allow him to create two different wines.

The Figtree fruit was very fine and almost delicate, but with a penetrating intensity ideally suited to a drier style of Riesling. On the other hand, the later-ripening Spencer vineyard was better suited to a sweeter style.

That sweeter-style Riesling was a real eye-opener for me. It carries more than 20/g litre of residual sugar, yet such is the balance and fine acidity that it creeps along the palate most undetected to finish beautifully dry.

These are both modern, site-specific Rieslings which reflect place and provenance against a background that is distinctly Great Southern. They should draw wine drinkers back to this variety.

In addition to the shiraz, which Cooper is styling towards the spicy, elegant style rather than the deep, rich full bodied ones, there is an oak-influenced sauvignon blanc in the wings under this range.

All I can say is that if there initial Rieslings are anything to go by, I cant wait to see all of them.



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The X Factor continued....

X by Xabregas Figtree Vineyard Riesling 2010

96/100

Pristine, pure and so delicately fine. This is a wonderful debut riesling for the new creation Xabregas. The fine, light citrus and minerality on the nose, with a touch of lime juice, is immediately enticing, while that little spicy lift is very much Great Southern. The delicate palate lingers with a fine persistence. Classic Riesling.
Perfect with Coffin Bay oysters.

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X by Xabregas Spencer Riesling 2010

95/100

A kabinett style of riesling carrying plenty of residual sugar. The nose is beautiful, with an exotic spicy citrus aroma. The palate is clean, with a delightful freshness. The substantial residual sweetness is held with a fine acid intensity that delivers a long finish without the slightest hint of cloying. A ground-breaking Aussie sweet riesling style.
Perfect with spicy deep-fried whitebait.

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