

# DUTSCHKE

Barossa Valley

In his “day job” as winemaker for Cellarmasters - Australia’s largest direct mail-order wine company, but also a class act (Wayne took the V isy Board “Best Shiraz” award of 1999 there) Wayne Dutschke was responsible for vinifying and/or overseeing and judging nearly two million cases annually. In a job like that, you taste a lot, learn a lot, and hone your craft. But home is where the heart is, and in 1990 Wayne and his Uncle, Ken Semmler, decided to vinify some of their own vineyard production.

This included the fruit of the first vines Ken had planted in the mid-seventies, when he returned from a tour of duty with the RAAF in Vietnam. (He received some timely advice and bought in at the end of a low point when Barossa wine was still being “de-colored” to make it sellable!) Mildara Blass and Grant Burge (first with Krondorf and then on his own), Mitchelton and Yalumba not only bought the fruit, but each employed Wayne for a time as winemaker.

Even today, Lyndoch and the south end of the Barossa is full of vineyards but not wineries, and when Ken and Wayne ventured into vinification, it was only a tiptoe. “We’d been making 300 cases of Willow Bend a year.” relates Wayne. Then, “in 1995 my uncle was away in Rwanda doing relief work and wasn’t here for vintage. I decided to fool around with the French varieties and I produced some straight Shiraz. In vintage 1998 we took the bull by the horns and lashed out to produce 750 dozen of a 100% shiraz we called St. Jakobi” after the nearby the church where four generations of Dutschkes have been married.

“My grandfather, Oscar Semmler, [who purchased the Lyndoch property in 1934] was heavily involved in the Barossa wine industry,” says Wayne. “In his day, though, the vineyard was planted to grapes for making fortified wines, and most of the property was a dairy. I used to ride my motorbike past this beautiful patch every day as a kid, on my way to help with the cows. I was only thirteen when he died, but it was Oscar who inspired me to become a wine grower.” Ken and Wayne dedicate their tiny lot of best Shiraz – a barrel selection usually relying heavily on the last of three



pickings and featuring the west side of their Lyndoch Vineyard - to Oscar’s memory.

Wayne’s craft with fortified wines in what he calls “the luscious style of Victoria” – including a Tokay (Muscadelle) that exists only thanks to utility poles that saved a single row of old vines from the dozer - has brought him major accolades. From 2002, he began bottling an approximately 7 year old (solera), popularly-priced blend of Palomino, Muscat, Verdehle, Torriga, Grenache Syrah called “old Codger”. “People think I’m crazy” for devoting so much time to fortifieds, says Wayne, “and maybe I am. It takes years to turn a buck and then a buck is about all the return you get!” But his laugh betrays him.

Wayne and his American wife Brenda Dutschke – with but one full-time employee – recently purchased land and built a winery. An old stable on the property has been converted for use as a “cook house” for their fortifieds. Total production will remain single-family sized and most of the family grapes continue to be sold.

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Total acreage: 45 acres

Total production: 6,500 cs.

Varieties: Shiraz; Cabernet

*Sauvignon. Most of the fruit – including Chardonnay, is sold to other wineries.*

“Willow Bend”

Merlot – Shiraz – Cabernet Sauv.

Shiraz “St. Jakobi”

Shiraz “Oscar Semmler”

*Fortifieds:*

“Ivy Blondina”

Frontignac (a.k.a. Muscat)

“Old Codger” Tawny Port

Muscat

Tokay

Tawny 22 Year Old