

## Penfolds' legendary wine style

In January, Southcorp Wines announced its intention to expand the Penfolds brand from 1.8 million cases to 5 million cases within 5 years.

This announcement follows Rosemount Estates' reverse takeover of Southcorp Wines last year and the appointment of Rosemount's senior winemaker, Phillip Shaw, as group senior winemaker at Southcorp.

The question for lovers of traditional Penfolds reds is whether this signals an intention or need to change the traditional Penfolds winemaking style. This style is largely based upon lower cropping, mature or older vines in the Barossa Valley and other places producing super ripe fruit (with resultant higher alcohol levels) demonstrating intense colour, complexity and fruit flavours.

Following vintage, the best parcels of wine are allocated to Penfolds sensational hierarchy of products (for example, Grange Hermitage downward

through Bin 389 and so on), and selected parcels are blended back with other wine.

Not everyone is a fan of big winemaking styles. Brian Crozier of Petaluma fame, although not referring to Penfolds wines, has amongst other commentators described wines made from big, super-ripe fruit as being "dead grape" wine.

Personally, I love the Penfolds range of wines, which seriously "over" deliver in terms of value for money and complex fruit flavour.

Future decisions about wine style at Southcorp will presumably be taken largely by Phillip Shaw, who is now Australia's leading and most influential winemaker, and who personally oversaw the tremendous growth of Rosemount products - based upon soft, fruit driven (lower alcohol) wine styles.

### "bright fruit"

Philip Shaw is said to talk in terms of "bright fruit". Precisely what this means for the legendary Penfolds wine style will unfold in future years.

Even if Southcorp wishes to maintain the style that has made Penfolds Australia's most famous wine brand, the question is whether Southcorp can access sufficient traditional fruit to make significantly increased volumes of product in the existing style.

Mature vineyards in the Barossa Valley and other places producing this type of fruit are as rare as hen's teeth.

A classic example of a unique, high quality, traditional Penfolds wine is Penfolds Old Vine Barossa Valley Bin 138 Shiraz Grenache Mourvedre 1998 which retails at \$22.50 per bottle.

If you cannot find this wine locally, contact Penfolds Barossa Valley cellar door on (08) 8568 9289.



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Penfolds unrivalled access to excellent Barossa Valley fruit is reflected in the depth of flavour, colour and complexity found in this great wine - this is a wine from a decade best vintage, which is a true bargain at this price. Get some of this wine (or the 1999 if you cannot find it) and you will not be disappointed.

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Talking of value at a lower price point, it is hard to beat St Hallett's 2001 Barossa Valley Poachers Blend for an excellent, inexpensive fruit driven white blend (cellar door price \$11 - telephone (08) 8563 7070). Made from Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Riesling, it demonstrates lovely, fresh fruitfulness. It is a great "everyday" drink.

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Mark is also extensively involved in the Australian wine industry through his interest in Hamilton's Ewell Vineyards, South Australia's first established wine company and writes for various wine industry and Australian legal publications.

