



# flash new producers

# Scorpo

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**T**here's nothing lethargic about Paul Scorpo's interest in wine. His passion for plant propagation and landscape design, along with his Southern Italian heritage, brings a deep and intuitive affiliation with his vineyard and wines – all of which shows in the glass.

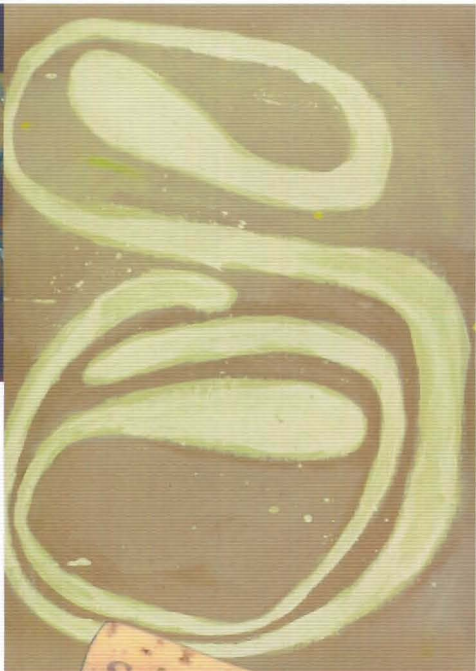
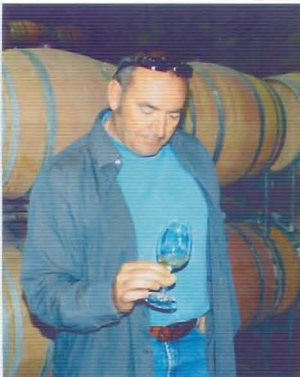
Planted in 1997 on the Mornington Peninsula, Scorpo is essentially a family business. Paul spends a great deal of time in the five hectare vineyard and speaks of it as a privilege to enjoy. Wife Caroline is equally in love with wine – and with being in the thick of it. Her cooking surrounds the discussions and tastings and this can be felt in the wines. The Scorpo wines are convivial drinks, made for the table. Daughters Sarah and Claire are also involved.

The commitment, passion and energy of the Scorpo family has yielded impressive early success and, with just three vintages released, Scorpo is already positioning itself as a stand-out small producer. There's fierce interest in the wine – and they've quickly hit the pages of some of Australia's most respected wine lists.

The wines are made by acclaimed neighbour Sandro Mosele at the nearby Kooyong Winery. The two men share an Italian heritage and there's a strong bond of respect and trust between them. Mosele's wine philosophy centres around simplicity and intuition, and if Paul were to make the wines he'd be right in the same groove. The idea is simple: to get the taste of the vineyard into the bottle unharmed.

The Scorpo vineyard, formerly a fruit orchard, is a protected northeast slope in the Merricks North area. It sits in the mid-point between the high Red Hill district and the low-lying Moorooduc Flats. The clay-rich soils are well suited to premium cool-climate grapes, ripening all four varieties with good flavour development, character and complexity. The vines are balanced, and so are the wines.

The wine styles themselves are evolving steadily. The first commercial releases were from 2001, the reds grabbing lots of attention. The 2001 Pinot Noir was a burly, masculine and concentrated wine with seething tannins and a raw untamed concentration. It etched a deep impression in many minds and turned more than a few heads at the region's Pinot Conference. Full of brooding youthful intensity and unquestionable dark cherry pinot flavour, it is ageing admirably.



The 2001 Shiraz magnetized and polarized, sparking many a lively exchange for its heightened sense of savoury complexity. It is one of the best shiraz the peninsula has produced, bursting with exotica and seductive cool-climate style. No wonder the demand was insatiable.

Wines from the super-cool, super-challenging 2002 vintage have done well too, building on the strength of the first releases. Scorpo's fruit came through nicely, delivering a set of wines that showed a clear evolutionary step from the previous year (though no shiraz was produced). Similar vineyard characters shone through in a clearer expression of all varieties, particularly the 2002 Pinot Noir. Pinot gris developed a strong following; the 2004 Pinot Gris is currently around in small quantities.

The 2003 releases of chardonnay, pinot noir and shiraz represent another forward step. The chardonnay has pedigree and style. It is classically regional and handsomely refined. The bright and complex 2003 pinot noir is deeply coloured, bursting with ripe dark cherry fruits, spice, and earth, and full of pure pinot character. There's a hatful of the pure, distinct and delicious 2003 shiraz for release mid-year and therein lies the key to these wines: they're clear, attractive, soulful expressions of their variety and origins. Seek them out.