

A toast, Australian style

HERE'S TO US

Wine Tim White

VICTORIA

Across the Bass Strait, Victoria does it all, from super-fine chardonnay and pinot noir around Port Phillip Bay to rich, heady fortifieds in the north-east. The undisputed classics are Rutherglen tokay and muscat (Morris, Chambers, Buller, Gehrig) and rich, peppery Grampians shiraz (Mount Langi Ghiran, Seppelt, Best's). You could also add Yarra Valley chardonnay (De Bortoli, Coldstream, Carlei Estate), which I always find strongly pear-scented

and salad-leaf crunchy, as distinct from the more stone-fruit characters found in the Mornington Peninsula (Stonier, Dromana, Kooyong).

There have also been some sensational pinots from Mornington over the past three vintages (Kooyong, Renard), but for me the most distinctive region is Gippsland (as exemplified by Bass Phillip). There's a silky, raspberry liqueur character about pinots from the region and I picked one in a blind tasting when I was last in Melbourne (I seem to recall it was a Moondarra Conception). More about pinot noir in a couple of weeks, when I report from the 2003 Pinot Celebration to be held on the Mornington Peninsula.

Perhaps the most exciting emergence has been that of pinot g (that is, pinot gris/grigio). Good examples are now coming from many cooler parts of the state: T'Gallant, Scorpo, Ten Minutes by Tractor in Mornington; Redbank's Sunday Morning, King Valley wine; Shadowfax and Provenance wines out of Geelong; Punt Road from the Yarra. They range from the crisp and crunchy to the fat and funky.

Oops, nearly forgot central Victoria. Mintiness prevails in Bendigo, whether shiraz or cabernet (BlackJack is good in the style). Heathcote continues to elicit loads of praise but I've found the recent wines of Jasper Hill, Hanging Rock and Wild Duck Creek good but lacking distinctiveness or excitement (although I am in the minority).

Good Hey!!

Cheers

Paul