

Nursery vines flavour

David's Red Rose

When *Grapegrower & Winemaker* talked Rosé wines with Denis Gastin, the wine that came out on top of Gastin's recommended list was one he'd bought in a hurry at the Royal Oak Booze Brothers liquor store in North Adelaide - on the way to his favourite Thai restaurant during a business trip to Adelaide.

The wine, he said, was the David Franz Red Rose 2002 - which went down a treat with selectively-spiced Pad Thai and Pan Dan Chicken. He could recall the back label of the bottle as stating the wine was from the Barossa, that only 50 cases were made, and that the wine was a blend of "many different components but including Grenache, Mataro, Pedro, Fronti, Semillon the list goes on..."

Grapegrower & Winemaker then began a search for this mystery winemaker which began with the North Adelaide Booze Brothers, involved scouring the pages of the Wine Industry Directory, made several false starts, and didn't meet with any luck in locating David Franz. Emails then followed to a few Barossa wine identities in hopes they would know the whereabouts of this winemaker - Jim Irvine for one, and then Barry Salter at the Barossa Wine & Tourism Association.

Eventually, the trail led to Philip Lehmann at Yalumba Wines... and you can imagine our delight when Philip said that David Franz was, in fact, Philip's brother, and one of the two sons of Peter and Margaret Lehmann. David had decided to drop the famous 'Lehmann' from his name. (Which may we add, would have made David far easier to find!)

Grapegrower & Winemaker eventually caught up with David Franz via his mobile phone, somewhere in the Barossa. We discovered a remarkable tale of a young Australian winemaker, setting out to establish his own name and reputation as a maker of high quality, intensive, hand-crafted wines.

David Franz Lehmann (31) was enjoying a round-the-world 'honeymoon' trip in the mid-late nineties in the United Kingdom with wife Nicki, when Nicki discovered she was pregnant. This news



David Franz, the mystery maker of David Franz Red Rose 2002.

put an end to the carefree joys of working holidays and travel.

The couple returned to Australia, with David's head full of dreams and every intention to make a name for himself as a winemaker. This, he discussed on his return, with father Peter.

"Dad said: 'That's not going to happen, son. You have to understand the grapes and the vineyard before you can start making wine'." David said.

"Dad offered me a position as a general labourer on the vineyard, and I started to learn that way and after a few years gradually took over management of the vineyards. I now manage the family's Stelzer and Stonewell Hill vineyards - around 75 acres.

"In 1998 with my brother Philip, we started mucking around making some

wine. In 1999 I produced six hogsheads - three of Shiraz and three of a Cab Shiraz blend. But it was in 2000 with Dad bankrolling and invaluable advice of great mentors like Andrew Wigan, Peter Scholz and Leonie Lange, and of course Dad himself, we produced around seven tonnes of Cab Sauv and six tonnes of Shiraz at PLW where I was working as a vintage cellar hand.

"In 1999, and 2001-04 I produced shed red-style - an increasing range of wines. These are all one to two-tonne batches, like the Red Rose, due for special release in the future.

"By 2002 I thought I'd try to expand the range, mostly because I wanted something else to drink.

"Dad had bought a block at Stonewell in '97 which still had the original 120-year-old, 'Old Nursery' block on it - Shiraz vines and a real hodge-podge of Grenache, Mataro, Pedro, Fronti and Semillon and a few others too!

"I thought that it would be interesting to try and make a wine that mixed these varieties together - so I went to see the old man and asked him if I could have the fruit from the nursery block. At that stage I was thinking to try making a light dry-red style. Someone suggested to me, why not try a Rosé?"

David, in his words "gave it a go".

"We picked the nursery block that year at an average of 13 Baume, chucked the fruit together (about 75-80% Shiraz) and ended up with about one tonne.

"The fruit was crushed straight onto dry ice and chilled. We macerated the skins over a week then basket-pressed at Langmeil Winery, then chilled again to -2°C and let it cold settle in tank, racked it, to a nice clear juice which was a beautiful intense dark-purple colour. We inoculated and cold fermented to full dryness which took another fortnight, then chilled to about 4°C for three or four weeks on yeast lees.

"I really like the yeast lees character and when these characteristics were where I wanted them, we racked again and sterile-filtered ready for bottling. The afternoon before we bottled, I threw in some Semillon concentrate for just a touch of sweetness to lift the fruit characters. And I threw in two huge buckets of dry ice into what was about 450 litres of wine, in an 1100-litre tank - just to give it a little bit of spritz. We sterile-bottled and the rest, as they say in the classics, is history. We made 50 cases of the 2002 Red Rose."

David said one of his favourite ironies about the David Franz Red Rose is that it is always the wine released at the youngest age, of the wines he makes, and yet the fruit comes from the property's "oldest" vines.

With the David Franz Red Rose 2003 release just about ready to go - readers may like to keep an eye out for this imaginative Barossa wine, made from a blend of new generation winemaking enthusiasm, family legacy and aged vines steeped in Stonewell vineyard history.

