

Yarra Yering and the legacy of Dr Bailey Carrodus

Published by: The Australian

Date February 21st 2015

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AT the wake following the death of Yarra Yering's founder Dr Bailey Carrodus in September 2008, I overheard members of his family agreeing that his passing meant they would have to henceforth rely on the doubtful accuracy of Wikipedia for explanations of arcane subjects. Indeed, he was a modern renaissance man with an awesome memory and an exceptional ability to think outside the square.

In 2009 Yarra Yering was bought by investment banker Ed Peter, who made it clear there would be no changes to the philosophy of the business – as had been the case with his prior acquisition of Kaesler, in the Barossa, where incumbent winemaker (and co-owner) Reid Bosward was given total responsibility. It was Bosward who decided to advertise the winemaker job when it fell vacant at Yarra Yering in mid-2013.

I feel sure Carrodus would have approved of the way Sarah Crowe was appointed. Crowe, a 12-year veteran of the Hunter Valley, flew down on a Wednesday for an interview and was offered the job the following Monday. Why? Bosward had worked with Tyrrell's and knew the capricious nature of the Hunter's weather. He reasoned she would be able to cope with the uncertainty of the climate of the Yarra Valley, north-east of Melbourne. Second, when asked which variety she would most like to work with, her answer wasn't the obvious pinot noir or chardonnay, but shiraz.

When I asked her what she found most challenging or interesting, the answer was quick: "It is the continuing presence of Carrodus in the very fabric of the business. His house has become the cellar door, but is not called that, it's 'the house', and always will be." Any changes must be incremental, and clearly justified. That's OK: Crowe sees her role as long-term (having just bought a house in Healesville) so she's content with a cautious approach.

2013 Yarra Yering Pinot Noir

From estate vines planted in '69, '81 and '84; open-fermented; 11 months in French oak (40% new). Good depth and hue; the bouquet and palate are filled with plum and cherry fruit, the French oak providing texture and context. 13.5% alc, screwcap. *95 points, drink to 2030, \$92*

2013 Yarra Yering Dry Red No. 1

A 70/15/10/5% blend of cabernet sauvignon, merlot, malbec and petit verdot planted in '69, matured for 20 months in 100% new French barriques. Deep crimson-purple, it proclaims its regal birth with the first whiff of the bouquet. Always great, this wine pushes past previous vintages with the sheer perfection of its flavour profile, mouthfeel and, above all else, balance. 13.5% alc, screwcap. *97 points, drink to 2053, \$92*

2013 Yarra Yering Dry Red No. 2

A blend of 96% shiraz, 2% viognier and 1% each of marsanne and mataro co-fermented on frozen viognier skins. Based on '73 plantings, the first Côte-Rôtie style made in Australia. A highly perfumed bouquet, the palate calmly elegant until the expansion and power of the finish. 13.5% alc, screwcap. *96 points, drink to 2043, \$92*

