



Maxwell
of McLAREN VALE

Maxwell Wines of McLaren Vale

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

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Introduction

Established in 1979, family owned Maxwell Wines, with its seventy acre estate vineyard, has built a reputation for producing hand made, rich and robust reds that combine exquisite fruit quality with structure and finesse. Located in the world-famous McLaren Vale wine district in South Australia, the winery and vineyards benefit from one of the most favourable sites in the region, providing the wines with a unique expression of the acclaimed McLaren Vale richness and style. Maxwell of McLaren Vale red wines in particular are appreciated worldwide for the purity of fruit and complementary oak handling indicative in the signature Lime Cave Cabernet and Ellen Street Shiraz. With an annual crush of around 250 tonnes only, the winery is able to separately vinify and mature individual vineyard parcels, maintaining the delicacies and nuances of each batch prior to final blending.

Terroir

The Maxwell estate vineyards benefit from a distinctive aspect in the heart of McLaren Vale, South Australia. Situated on a solid limestone hill facing southwards, the estate vines grow in minimal (as little as 15cm) porous topsoils, with some mature 50+ year old Shiraz vines planted in alluvial loam, again over limestone. These vines, planted in 1953, provide fruit for the highly regarded Maxwell Ellen Street Shiraz. Many of the remaining mature vines on the property were planted in 1972, while the purchase of an adjoining vineyard in 2010 has added old vine Grenache of some 80+ years of age. The entire estate prospers from a Mediterranean climate, with the close proximity to the Gulf of St Vincent moderating the warm to hot growing conditions of the South Australian spring and summer.

The geology of the estate has been established as Blanche Point Formation featuring Tortachilla Limestone, with alluvial clays and loams in the depressions adjoining the winter creek. The dominant Blanche Point Formation was created in the Eocene Epoch, 56 to 34 million years ago when the entire estate was more than 20 metres below sea level, as evidenced by the proliferation of ancient seashell fossils found under the vines. This limestone base so close to the surface is not typical of McLaren Vale however, and it provides a particular advantage in the pursuit of small quantities of premium wine grapes. In combination with vine maturity, the limestone promotes concentration in the berries through a natural balance between vine stress and vigour. The result is tight bunches of small berries showing excellent flavour and tannin, with average yields of only 1 to 3 tonnes/acre.

One notable vineyard on the estate sits above and behind the winery atop the crest of the limestone hill, known locally as Lumb's Hill. Identified as a 1972 planting of the "Reynella Selection" Cabernet Sauvignon vine, it originates from vines brought into South Australia by noted wine industry pioneer John Reynell over 150 years ago. Back in the mid-1800s, John Reynell was planting some of the earliest vineyards in South Australia, in an area just to the north of McLaren Vale. Having collected vine cuttings in South Africa on his way from England, he found that particular vines on his property kept producing noticeably more flavoursome berries, so he undertook a process of selection to create a vineyard of cuttings from only those vines that bore superior fruit. Naturally these Cabernet vines became known as the "Reynella Selection", and have quite simply been shown to be perfectly suited to the McLaren Vale climate for well over a century. Our cuttings were taken directly from this Reynella vineyard, and planted over 3 decades ago in the shallow topsoil over solid limestone at the crest of the Maxwell estate. It is this fruit that makes the Maxwell Lime Cave Cabernet acclaimed worldwide.



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Varietals

Maxwell of McLaren Vale is a specialist red wine producer. The estate plantings include Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Grenache, Petit Verdot and Tempranillo. A small planting of Viognier is used in co-fermentation with Shiraz. The winery also makes fresh varietal white wines from estate grown Verdelho and Semillon, while premium cool-climate Chardonnay is sourced from nearby Kuitpo in the Adelaide Hills.

Vinification

Spanning three main levels, the Maxwell Winery was designed to take advantage of gravity flow throughout the winemaking process, contributing to the outstanding quality of the wines. Of particular note are the five unique open fermenters used for fermenting the best parcels of red grapes. The idea behind the construction of these was to recreate the gentle hand-plunging methods of years gone by. Taking a relatively long seven to nine days to ferment a parcel of fruit to dryness, these fermenters provide a gentle yet effective extraction of colour, tannin and flavour from the skins and seeds to the fermenting juice. Holding only two tonnes of fruit each, it allows the winemakers the chance to focus on premium small-batch vinification techniques, and treat each separate parcel of fruit that enters the winery during vintage individually.

Importantly, a special barrel cellar was also designed into the new winery. Hidden away at one end of the winery, the cellar was cut into solid limestone. With the natural earthen floor and limestone walls, the cellar creates an ideal environment of constant temperature and humidity, providing a perfect place to mature Maxwell's best wines in premium French and American oak barrels.

Mark Maxwell

Mark Maxwell is a Director and the CEO of Maxwell Wines. Beginning his winemaking career by working in school holidays plunging ferments and cleaning tanks for his father and other local wineries, he has now completed over 30 vintages for the Winery. His responsibility covers all aspects of the family business - from tending his estate vineyards and liaising with growers, through to overseeing Winery operations, and ultimately in time, showcasing the wines around the world alongside the Winery's export partners. This 'from the ground up' approach gives Mark the opportunity to do justice to the superb wines created from his estate vines, wines that bear Maxwell's signature style: flavour-rich, pure, detailed and intense, yet balanced.

Further information is available at www.maxwellwines.com.au

