

# THE DOMINION POST

Wellington, NZ - January 2003

## RIESLING CAN FINALLY REST ON ITS WELL DESERVED LAURELS

Anything that advances the cause of Riesling gets my vote - two votes if the result is the wine of the exceptional quality produced by Jeffrey Grosset and Robert Hill Smith, two of Australia's best known Riesling producers.

If their aim in producing *mesh*, a 2002 Eden Valley Riesling, was, as they say, to enhance the reputation of Riesling as one of the world's noblest grapes they have achieved it. They have, in the process, also underscored the reputation of the Eden Valley (near the head of the Barossa) as one of Australia's great Riesling regions, not to mention their own considerable reputations.

Grosset's Polish Hill and Watervale Rieslings are among Australia's most highly prized wines and the Hill Smith family, which owns Yalumba, has, since 1969 with Pewsey Vale, made one of the finest estate Rieslings in the country. It also produces a classy Riesling under the Heggies Vineyard label as well as Yalumba's Handpicked Riesling.

Grosset and Hill Smith also have something else in common. They are both wedded to the screw cap. Yalumba was involved in pioneering work on its use and development in the 1970's and used the metal closures until 1984. Grosset is the man who in 2000 revived interest and convinced many other winemakers in the Clare Valley to use screw caps to preserve the purity of their Rieslings. It was from there that interest spread to New Zealand where screwcaps are now being widely used, even, as Grosset is now doing, for some premium reds.

So how was *mesh* - this wonderful rich, mineral Riesling - produced?

Simple. Fruit was allocated from alternate rows in two Eden Valley Riesling vineyards, the grapes were hand-picked then pressed and fermented at the respective wineries.

After each of the components were assessed blind the wine was then assembled, resulting in an almost precise 50/50 split between the Grosset and Hill Smith, which probably says as much for wines being made in vineyards as it does for the winemaking skills of those involved in its production.

Anyway, the result, ... is a must for anyone who is even half serious about Riesling, which means a whole lot more that it might have even a couple of years ago.

New Zealanders, finally, are overcoming prejudices formed years ago by such things as Riesling Sylvaner and by Rhine Riesling and by Rieslings made mostly in the lighter, sweeter Germanic style. Many of the Rieslings that are now being produced in New Zealand are richer, drier and gutsier; wines that appeal not only in their own right, but particularly to drinkers of Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay who are looking for an alternative.

The best part is that Riesling represent, in terms of value for money, some of the best buys on the market and it is often possible to buy them with a bit of bottle age, as the glorious toasty, honeyed characters which come with maturity are starting to develop....

*Warren Barton*



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