



JAMES
HALLIDAY

Small is beautiful

IN 2010, QUEENSLAND grew 0.0008% of the national crush (the good news) but only produced 0.0004% of the national wine output (the bad news). The Australian Bureau of Statistics

does not apportion the contributions of the two recognised regions, the Granite Belt and South Burnett, but at a guess around 75% would have come from the Granite Belt.

All of which goes to show that very, very small can be beautiful, because the Granite Belt has steadily increased the overall quality of the wines from its 47 producers over the past decade. Some, such as the Puglisi family's Ballandean Estate, have been producing good wine since 1970, Golden Grove since 1985, while others have come on stream over the past 10 to 15 years.

That a region, whose entire southern and eastern boundaries mark the border with NSW, can produce such good wine is due to one factor: its altitude (which varies little) of 810 metres. The downsides are spring frost and late summer

Granite Belt wineries have steadily increased the overall quality of their wines over the past decade

rainfall; when these do not strike, the Granite Belt is capable of ripening all of the major varieties plus many alternative varieties. It is also home to some colourful winemakers, ranging from the ever-cheerful Angelo Puglisi through to magazine front-cover man Ewen Macpherson to relatively new arrival Paola Cabezas Rhymer, who has a (very) alternative take on a mud bath (see www.winecompanion.com.au).

Then there is Sirromet, the major presence in the region, with 146ha of vines, the largest winery, and the long-serving winemaker Adam Chapman. In the space of a week in April it won gold medals in European wine shows for its '07 St Judes Grand Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon and its '09 Le Sauvage Chardonnay.

The best news is that the Granite Belt was not inundated by the Queensland floods. Rain started before budburst and fell continuously to mid-January, with intermittent falls thereafter, delaying harvest by two to three weeks, but not causing the disasters encountered elsewhere.

The region is bisected by the New England Highway, and has always relied heavily on tourism, both for those who regard it as a destination and for those treating it as a stop on their way north or south. So the vigneron are waiting to welcome anyone who comes their way.



2009 SYMPHONY HILL SHIRAZ VIOGNIER

While Ewen Macpherson is a Bachelor of Applied Science in Viticulture, he and wife Elissa have employed Mike Hayes, also qualified and a third-generation resident of the Granite Belt, as viticulturist and winemaker. The net result is a very well made, bright crimson-purple wine, its aromas as vibrant as the medium-bodied palate. The plum and black cherry fruit with notes of spice and licorice are given spine by savoury, fine tannins. 14% alc; screwcap

Rating: 94 points

Drink: to 2025

Price: \$45



2009 BOIREANN THE LURNEA

Winemaker/owner Peter Stark (with wife Therese) takes the small-is-beautiful theme down to the level of a skilled miniaturist painter, crafting 800 dozen bottles a year, of up to eight different wines. Here it is the Bordeaux blend of cabernet sauvignon/merlot/cabernet franc/petit verdot replete with a fragrant, cassis-accented bouquet, then a finely built palate offering red and black fruit flavours, the tannins on the finish especially convincing. 13.5% alc; screwcap

Rating: 94 points

Drink: to 2019

Price: \$28



2009 SUMMIT ESTATE ALTO SPANISH COLLECTION MONASTRELL GARNACHA SHYRA TEMPRANILLO CABERNET

You might think just the name is a big enough mouthful, but the '08 version also boasted tannat in the blend. The '09 has a healthy crimson colour, and is undeniably complex. Its surprise is the black, not red, fruit flavour spectrum, aided by the savoury tannins and oak. A major feature is the balance of the wine, thanks to skilfully controlled extract. 14.2% alc; screwcap

Rating: 94 points

Drink: to 2029

Price: \$35