

Just one of the locals...



Ric Einstein is a New South Wales wine journalist best known for his website www.torbwine.com and famous (or infamous) for his yearly travels through South Australian wineries. On part 2 of his trip to McLaren Vale he stopped in at Longwood. A quite achiever almost hidden on Foggo's Rd, McLaren Vale...

The Longwood winery is one that flies so far below the radar, it is in danger of colliding with a submarine. Phil keeps a low profile; the winery is not even listed in Halliday's book., yet I always visit Longwood for two reasons. Firstly, Phil Christiansen is regarded as one of the nicest guys not just in the business, but in the area. Secondly, he makes very fine wine where the fruit is allowed to do the talking, and it talks oh so sweetly. Most of his wine is exported to the USA, but limited quantities are available in Australia if you look hard enough.

Phil is a very talented guy and started off as a cellar hand at Hardys and wound up being involved in the making of Eileen. He absorbed a lot of winemaking knowledge and skills along the way. Phil is a very hands on sort of guy and does it all himself, a real one man band if ever I have seen one. He even does some of his own building work.

If you take a walk through Phil's barrel room and cast your eye over the names on the barrels, you will see that he makes wine for some well-respected labels. A fair amount of his work is contract and he is not averse to making a barrel or two for peoples' own consumption. In addition, he has recently bought the Twelve Staves brand so we can

now look forward to some pretty smart wines coming out under that label as well.

One characteristic I have noticed with Phil's wines is that they sometimes open up "McLaren Vale bottle stink" so they invariably need a good decant, but once the stink blows off, you are normally left with a glorious wine. I purchased some of his 1999 Reserve Shiraz, and every time I open a bottle, I not only enjoy it, but am impressed with the quality of the wine and the price.

Longwood 2004 Shiraz is sealed under cork and sells for \$23 in Australia and approximately \$25 in the US. 400 cases have been produced. When first opened, there were some slightly reductive stinky characters but history has shown that it will probably blow off with decanting. The tannins are unobtrusive and tight, providing a solid backing for this ample-

Never get between a man and his press. No matter how much of a gentleman he is...

weight, harmonious wine that is very well-made and most enjoyable. Delightful, pure fruit is driving the wine, but it does have very good balance; flavours of chocolate, black cherry, vanilla, coffee, and more chocolate slide down the gullet with consummate ease and I even 'accidentally' swallowed some. Rated as Recommended with *** for value, the rating should improve in the short term.

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Longwood 2004 Reserve Shiraz is sealed under cork and sells in the US for \$36. Only 180 cases have been made. Tannins are very tight and unobtrusive, and solidly back the distinctive fruit, which drives the wine. Once again when first opened, the characteristic McLaren Vale bottle stink was in evidence but started to blow off quickly. Just ample in weight, the consistency is supple, the structure tight and the wine shows a touch of class. With black cherry, mulberry, milk

chocolate, and hints of oregano on the finish, the wine is drinking well now, but will only get better. It is worth seeking out and is rated as Highly Recommended with **** for value, and that rating should improve as the wine hits its peak around 2010 and beyond.

Longwood 2004 Crow Eaters Shiraz spent 10 months in oak, was bottled the previous week and will sell in the UK for £7; 450 cases were produced. The bouquet is interesting and attractive, being fruit driven with plum and pepper characters. Unobtrusive, minimal smooth tannins combine with fresh acid and deep, pure fruit to deliver rich, ripe plums, pepper and chocolate. A juggable wine, the fruit is doing all the talking and there's lots of it. Ample-weight with a supple consistency and harmonious complexity, this is a very good, easy drinking wine that is rated as Recommended with **** for value.



Twelve Staves 2004 Shiraz Grenache is a 60/40 blend, sealed under screwcap and sells in the US for \$12. The fruit was sourced from Blewitt Springs. Unfortunately the wine was too cold, so we had to warm it up in our hands. Sweet on the uptake with red and black fruits, the chocolate then kicks in and continues through into a spicy spectrum. Medium-weight, dusty tannins combined with balanced acid and distinctive fruit to form a seamless, harmonious agreeable wine that would be perfect in a bistro situation. Considering its price, it's bloody good value in the US market. Rated as Agreeable with **** for value.

I have never walked out of Longwood feeling anything but happy, and this visit was no exception. Phil is quietly and methodically doing what he wants to do and doing it well. In all his wines, the fruit is doing the talking and none of them are in your face or over the top. As Phil's influence and complete control on the Twelve Staves label starts to be felt, that is another label that will be worth watching. These wines are certainly not in the typical McLaren Vale stereotype mould, so if you want something different, try and find them. Apart from that, he is regarded as one of the "gentleman" of McLaren Vale.

– Ric Einstein

Plug me in- No, its not an advanced wine analysis tool, or a tractor simulator... Phil's just likes his games machine!



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Our accountant because we aren't making enough money...

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Your favourite winery has been sold, the site gutted, the equipment auctioned and the staff retrenched.

Only the name remains.

Enough! Someone had to fight back. We knew we had to act. We gathered all the best small wineries we knew and winefightclub was born. There is more to wine than profit (although our accountant is upset with our mission statement!)