

# 'TAPPENINGS'

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## Editorial

The past two vintages, 2008 and 2009, have challenged southeastern Australian vignerons in unprecedented ways. Are they an indication of what we should brace ourselves for in future vintages?

I respond to the question in "A Tale of Two Vintages", which is an analysis of the climatic anatomy of vintages 2008 and 2009 in Tapanappa's three vineyards,

- > The Tiers Vineyard in the Piccadilly Valley,
- > Whalebone Vineyard in Wrattobully, and
- > Foggy Hill at Parawa on the Southern Fleurieu Peninsula.

On June 4th, a few days into what I hope becomes a wet winter, I will be working for the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation presenting a seminar (*Blending the Rules*) and the dinner speech on *A Bold Vision of Australia's Future Fine Wine Landscape*.

The well designed AWBC "Landmark Australia Tutorial" for 12 important international fine wine gatekeepers is being held in the Barossa Valley in the week beginning June 1st. Both presentations will be up on Tapanappa's site [www.tapanappawines.com.au](http://www.tapanappawines.com.au) after June the 4th.

However I quote from the Vision speech because my confidence is growing that after the public trauma of hot inland, irrigation dependent grape politics and as the demise of the branded commodity wine industry reaches a nadir, Australia's fine wine industry will finally begin to have its well-deserved day in the sun.

*There are two wine industries in Australia, branded commodity made by a handful of large enterprises from mainly hot, inland, irrigation dependent vineyards, largely purchased for everyday drinking from supermarkets by price conscious consumers.*

*Then there is the Australian fine wine industry composed of 2500 small vigneron businesses and including the large producers in fine wine mode, scattered over the 62 mainly coastal, cooler, higher rainfall regions, increasingly only growing the varieties best suited to their region.*

*Their vines are reaching maturity and they are applying more and more fastidious and sustainable viticultural practices and less and less intervention in their winemaking. By comparison to any other fine wine producing nation they are well capitalised and are well educated in vine and wine technology, and marketing and business practices. Their wine styles are distinctive and the quality is very good and getting better. Australia's domestic market cannot absorb all of their volume at the premium price they require and deserve and they are hungry for the export opportunity that has so far eluded them.*

*It is currently not obvious to observers and managers caught up by the damage of change that Australia has just finished two decades of branded commodity wine growth to dominance and inevitable decline and is now entering the decades of Australian fine wine emergence. As the trauma recedes that will become apparent to all."*

Finally Tapanappa is about to release the 2008 Tiers Chardonnay and the 2008 Foggy Hill Pinot Noir. I am very excited about both of these wines despite the difficulties of the vintage. The 2008 Tiers is complex and fruit sweet but also pure and refined as Tiers Chardonnay always is. The Foggy Hill Pinot Noir is just about the most exciting wine that my 41 years of being a vigneron has produced. How do I describe it? Quintessential cool climate Pinot Noir but rich and exotic, it is the wine that will make me plant more vines at Foggy Hill on the Fleurieu Peninsula.

When you read about the climate statistics of the vintage 2008 in the "Tale of Two Vintages" you will understand why Tapanappa 2008 Foggy Hill Pinot Noir tastes as it does.

Brian Croser, 26/5/09.

Most exciting wine in 41 years of winemaking

Vision Speech

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## A tale of two vintages (or the heat is on)

Since 2006 South-Eastern Australia has experienced 4 successive extremely dry and hot vintages. Even in my failing memory of the 41 vintages I have made wine this is an unprecedented sequence of heat and drought. Is it climate change?

Before I express my opinion, let me make a declaration. I am a whole-hearted believer that we are experiencing climate change and things will get hotter, drier and wilder.

Facts, responses and adaptation

It is even more certain that CO<sub>2</sub> levels are rising (from 284ppm in 1832 to 387ppm today) and the maths tells us that the burning of fossil fuels by man is the primary cause of the increase. CO<sub>2</sub> levels are projected to inevitably rise, possibly to 500 ppm by 2100. It is inarguable that CO<sub>2</sub> is a greenhouse gas and increasing concentrations will trap more heat in the earth's atmosphere.

Whether there are other causes of the current global warming (wobbles of the earth's axis) or whether feedback mechanisms or other unanticipated processes ameliorate or exacerbate the warming is beyond my ken. I do know that we need to adapt to a hotter and drier climate for the foreseeable future and that we should do all in our power to urgently convert from burning fossil fuels to renewable energy generation to limit the increase in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration.

However I do not believe the circumstances of the past four vintages were caused by global warming. They are victims of the normal drought cycles that are so much a part of this old continent's past climatic behaviour and which may become more frequent due to global warming, but over decades and not mere 4-year periods.

We will return to a sequence of cool and even cold and wet vintages, and 2006 to 2009 will be consigned to the back of vinous memories as we complain about moisture induced vine disease and diluted and green flavoured grapes.

The challenging 2008/09 vintages

I have found the past two vintages (2008 and 2009) in particular very testing. Each has started perfectly, although 2009 was warmer and drier than 2008 through the growth spurt stage from the beginning of October until the end of December. In 2008, January remained cool, but in 2009 the end of January (the 28th, Australia Day) and the first week of February (Black Saturday, the 7th) provided some brutal heat. None of the Chardonnay in Tapanappa's Tiers Vineyard or Pinot in Foggy Hill had gone through veraison at this time. They weathered the heat waves unscathed.

In 2009, the Cabernet and Merlot at Whalebone Vineyard were accelerated through veraison by the end of January heat wave which recorded 4 days over 40°C with a maximum of 44.58°C. They then suffered 20% shrivel and sun burn in the February the 7th, Black Saturday heat wave. In 2008, by contrast, January and February remained moderate and it was the 15-day heat wave at the beginning of March that decimated unsuspecting nearly mature fruit in all vineyards. All three of Tapanappa's vineyards were harvested in 2008 with strict quality control supervision eliminating all sun burnt and shrivelled fruit. In 2009 after the January/February heat events the rest of the ripening season was cool, dry and sunny. The only shrivel or sunburnt fruit in 2009 was at Whalebone and the same diligence to only pick sound fruit was exercised as in 2008.

Tiers Vineyard, Picedilly Valley, South Australia



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## A tale of two vintages (or the heat is on) - *continued*

Ironically the heat summations for 2008 and 2009 are not far above average although 2009 was distinctly cooler. What is very instructive is to look at the number

of days in the growing season in each vineyard at 30°C and above, at 35°C and above and at 40°C and above. The table below tells the story.

Vineyard	Average	2008	2009	2008			2009		
	BED	BED	BED	>30,	>35,	>40	>30,	>35,	>40
Whalebone	1402	1469	1383	49,	23,	4.	36,	12,	5.
The Tiers	1177	1227	1165	39,	12,	0.	23,	9,	1.
Foggy Hill	1135	1207	1135	27,	8,	0.	14,	6,	1.

(BED is Biologically Effective Degrees-the sum of the heat above 10°C received by the vine for the 7-month growing season, October to April).

- > In 2008 neither Tiers nor Foggy Hill had any day at or above 40°C despite the 15-day heat wave.
- > 2008 had 50% more days over 30°C than 2009 in all 3 vineyards.
- > Foggy Hill has by far the least number of days exceeding 30°C.
- > Relative to Foggy Hill, The Tiers has 50% more and Whalebone has double the number of days over 30°C.

The heat summations (BED) for The Tiers and Foggy Hill are very similar but Foggy Hill has a third less hot days. The cool day, warm night environment at Foggy Hill Vineyard on the Fleurieu Peninsula perfectly nurtures and protects the delicate and exotic aromas and flavours of Pinot Noir.

The Tiers Vineyard in the Piccadilly Valley averages nearly as cool as Foggy Hill but the warmer day development of ripe flavours and the cold night preservation of natural acid perfectly suits Chardonnay.

### Vintage Comparison of BED (°C Days)

Vineyard	AVG.	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Coonawarra	1376	1358	1455	1431	1809	1503	1445
Whalebone	1402*	1293	1340	1394	1534	1469	1383

\* Based on the average of the 6 vintages recorded.

The warmer and more extreme Whalebone Vineyard in Wrattontully ripens Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Shiraz to optimal colour, tannin texture and ripe fruit aromas and flavours.

Not only have the 2008 and 2009 vintages been notable for their heat events, they are two of the driest on record. In particular, the critical ripening months of January, February and March are when the heat events occurred and when water demand by the vine was the highest. Averaged over the two vintages, all 3 of Tapanappa's vineyards received less than 60% of normal rain in those months. The use of judicious amounts of vine saving drip irrigation kept the Tapanappa vineyards in good health through the exceptionally dry months and heat events.

Finally, for the six vintages that we have recorded climatic data at the Whalebone Vineyard, it has been consistently cooler than Coonawarra.

*I am really looking forward to a vintage with rain  
and without a ferocious heat event. Despite the  
vicissitudes of 2008 and 2009, each of our vineyards  
has performed and produced wines that are  
true to variety and style and are  
“pure expressions of their unique Australian terroirs”.*

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## 2009 Vintage

The climate of the 2009 vintage is described in detail in "A Tale of Two Vintages." 2009 can be summed up in Tapanappa's vineyards as cool and very dry. Unaffected by the January/February heatwave, Tapanappa has harvested modest yields of perfect condition and typical fruit from its 3 "distinguished vineyard sites."

## New Releases

Parental excitement I have to declare a parental excitement about the release in June of the Tapanappa 2008 Tiers Vineyard Chardonnay and the Tapanappa 2008 Pinot Noir from Foggy Hill Vineyard. The full vintage notes for each of these unique wines are on the Tapanappa site at [www.tapanappawines.com.au](http://www.tapanappawines.com.au), and excerpts are included below.

### Tapanappa 2008 Tiers Chardonnay

Tapanappa 2008 Tiers Vineyard Chardonnay is a very typical wine of the Tiers Vineyard in a warm vintage. The varietal aromas are ripe peach and melon. Subtle marzipan and brioche aromas and flavours are contributed by the malo-lactic, yeast lees contact and oak.

A consistent terroir feature of Tiers Chardonnay is its very significant texture, followed by a savoury finish and the persistence of the flavours. The 2008 Tapanappa Tiers Vineyard Chardonnay will develop spicy honey and brulee characters with bottle age of up to 10 years.

The in-bottle analysis of Tapanappa 2008 Tiers Vineyard Chardonnay is:

Alcohol 13.9%, pH 3.11, total acid 7.46 gpl as tartaric, SO<sub>2</sub> 135 ppm, volatile acid 0.50 gpl. Bottled on the 10th of March, 2009, only 1500 cases were produced.

### Tapanappa 2008 Pinot Noir from Foggy Hill Vineyard

Tapanappa 2008 Pinot Noir from Foggy Hill Vineyard is of medium plus colour intensity and cerise in hue. The aromas are ripe and exotically fragrant of preserved black cherries, mulled wine spices with a ripe mulberry component.

The flavours are rich, sweet and spicy and are balanced against the tannin and acid without the interference of alcohol. The tannins are significant but soft and savoury and the whole wine is melded into a complex fabric of aromas, flavours, tastes and texture, which is seamless.

This the second exciting wine of the new Pinot Noir terroir at Maylands Farm at Parawa at the apex of the Fleurieu Peninsula, South Australia. The analysis of the bottled wine is:

Alcohol 13.8%, pH 3.68, Total Acid 5.8gpl, SO<sub>2</sub> 88ppm, Volatile Acid 0.4gpl. Bottled on the 11th of March 2009, only 630 cases were produced.

Pinot Noir, Foggy Hill Vineyard, Fleurieu Peninsula  
South Australia

