



Wine Ray Jordan

Premium Sandalford no drama for Paul

The wine is an extraordinary statement of the best in Margaret River cabernet sauvignon.

Wine scribes seek inspiration from many sources. As you would expect, most of it is vinous.

The other day I hit the jackpot — a vinous inspiration that may well lead to my first work as a playwright.

See what you think.

Scene I: Recently appointed winemaker Paul Boulden rocks into his first week at Sandalford, has a quick look at some of the equipment, takes in the vineyards and checks out some of the wines.

Thinks to himself: “How the hell do I get some new gear in here, improve the vineyard and get some action on the brands?”

To a nearby cellar hand: “Hey. What’s the boss’ name again? Oh, yeah, Prendiville.”

Scene II: Boulden is on the blower to the boss the next day. “Pete, er, Petermaaaaaate, place looks great, we’ve got some good fruit in here, but I wouldn’t mind spending a few bob to get some new gear. Later maybe, yeah, OK. Look, I’ve got a great idea for a new super premium wine. Pick the best of the best and we’ll call it the Prendiville. Best of vintage every year. Top drawer and no compromise, just like you Pete, quality and style.”

All right, such obvious sycophancy is not exactly going to fill the Playhouse with its subtlety. But it’s a start, and in the interests of avoiding litigation I stress that the scenario is a product of my imagination, but the players and the wine are very real. Paul Boulden is the winemaker at Sandalford, and it was his idea to use the rich source of Margaret River fruit for a special

wine that gets all the bells and whistles treatment; and Peter Prendiville owns the joint.

But let me get on to the real story about the birth of Sandalford’s new premium wine, Prendiville.

When Boulden joined Sandalford a few years ago, he knew that those 35-year-old vines, which are some of the oldest in the district, had the potential to supply the type of quality fruit that could be given special treatment in pursuit of a cabernet above the norm.

In the end he chose three of seven blocks on the Wilyabrup property to form the backbone of the wine. Now I must remind you that the standard cabernet sauvignons from here are no slouches. Recent vintages have won significant awards and a short vertical of the 01, 02 and 03 reminded me of how good they can be.

Boulden recognised the potential of this vineyard and the district early on and the 2001 vintage was the first 100 per cent Margaret River cabernet Sandalford produced. The 01 was pretty good but compared to the later vintages its lack of finesse and focus becomes evident.

However, subsequent refinements in the winery and vineyard have improved the wines immeasurably. In the main, more sympathetic and gentler crushing, and techniques designed to minimise tannin extraction have resulted in wines that have better texture and flavour intensity.

So back to the Prendiville. From day one of that 2002 vintage, Boulden recognised that he had something special in the winery and kept it separate from the outset.

Initially it was a case of winemaker’s secret other business, but in the end he approached Prendiville with the concept of a super premium wine and eventually the name Prendiville was settled.

For me it makes perfect sense. Though Sandalford has a long history going back to the first days of the Swan River Colony with one John Septimus Roe, there is no doubt in my mind that had Prendiville not stepped in and pumped a good deal of cash into the place, a piece of West Australian wine history would have disappeared down the gurgler.

The wine itself after maceration on skins in small one-tonne static fermenters receives two years in 100 per cent new French oak. Other premium Sandalford reds get only a year in oak.

Boulden eventually selected 20 of the best — the rest went into the standard cabernet — to produce just 1000 six packs, each in individually numbered bottles, and what’s more bottled under screw-cap.

The wine is an extraordinary statement of the best in Margaret River cabernet sauvignon. It is deeply intense and powerful with lashings of ripe black currant and black olive character. The tannins are ripe and the palate silky yet with a fine firm spine.

At around \$90 it’s not cheap, but with this wine Sandalford has joined the elite cluster of other Margaret River stars such as Cullen and Moss Wood. You are probably going to find this at restaurants, though some of the better liquor stores should have it.



Winemaker Paul Bouden.



Sandalford's new premium wine, Prendiville.