

Up the creek, well and truly



THERE were grim faces around the table at Langhorne Creek the other night. Mike Farmilo, Nick Stock and your writer had just spent a day nudging the sniffers at the annual Showcase Judging, where the six best local wines are chosen for inclusion in The Langhorne Creek Showcase Selection.

It's not called a wine show, and no trophies or medals are awarded, but it's still judged pretty much like a standard wine show, with three judges and an associate, tasting blind and averaging their scores. The rankings are still graded from no award (below 15.5 points out of 20) to bronze (15.5-6.9), silver (17-18.4), and gold (18.5-20), and we chose a Champion Wine of the Showcase.

The sombre mood at that dinner table had little to do with the quality of the delicious selections we made. Uh-huh. This was about water. Drought. The New Heat. Langhorne Creek was the



Philip White

first Australian wine district to be told its irrigation water allocation is now zero. And if Premier Mike Rann's huge evaporation pan goes ahead at Wellington, their allocation could well be zero for some years to come.

Unless, of course, there's huge rain up the Bremer Valley, from Salem to Harrogate, and the traditional Bremer flood gushes through, watering the old eucalypt mudflat vineyards closest to the River. These floods submerge whole vineyards, and rarely come at the best time, but might save sufficient vineyards

for the district to survive, as it did before modern irrigation.

Enough will never be enough, of course. Larnck - as the frogs and local humans pronounce it - has become a very big district. In 1991, there were 471 hectares of those traditional floodplain vineyards. Their limit was determined by the extent of the flooding, as the aquifer which they had used for supplementary irrigation was cactus: finally too salty for vines.

So the then-Premier Dean Brown arranged new irrigation permits to allow huge-scale pumping from Lake Alexandrina for new vineyards well away from that original flooding mudflat, with its distinctive minty eucalyptols and amazing hoard of Jimmy Watson and Montgomery Trophies, most of which sat on John Glaetzer's desk at Wolf Blass.

So by mid 1997, there were about 2,500 hectares, most planted by outsiders and newcomers in untried soil away from the Bremer. Key locals thought that might double again in the five years to 2002, to around 5,000 hectares. But in two years there were already 4,317 hectares. At the end of the 2006 vintage, the figure was about 5,800 hectares bearing, with another 332 hectares yet to bear a berry.

One reliable measure of the feverish gold rush mentality which drove this ridiculous, and now obviously unsustainable growth, was a press release from Orlando, boasting that its new planting involved 200,000 trellis posts, 1,000km of drip line, and 50,000km of wire.

Larnck was becoming a kind of Coonawarra Lite: cheaper coolish area fruit grown much closer to the big refineries of the Barossa and McLaren Vale. Fruit whose source would rarely be acknowledged.

In one daring hit, Peter Pargerter, of Vinescape

Palate - Our guide to your region

Starting May 12, The Independent Weekly will be giving Cellar Doors, Restaurants, Bars, Hotels and Cafes the opportunity to promote themselves in a rotating regional food and wine feature on our wine pages.

- Week 1 - McLaren Vale
- Week 2 - Adelaide Hills
- Week 3 - Barossa Valley
- Week 4 - Clare Valley

Participants will be required to undertake a series of four advertisements and will be spaced one month apart.

Ad Cost is \$150 + GST per insertion with artwork free of charge. (84mm x 110mm) Total investment is \$600 + GST (Save \$797 + GST).

Invoicing will take place at the end of each month with thirty day payment terms. Space is limited to the first four businesses to book in each region - be quick!

Contact Deb Kemp on 8224 1613 or 0417 467 767
 dkemp@independentweekly.com.au

my picks

Bleasdale Sparkling Shiraz
 \$16; 13.5% alcohol; cork; 88 points

Classic old fashioned Mississippi mudcake flavours abound in this soulful, moody darkness from the Larnck flats. But there are also faint hints of the ethereal minty eucalypt which makes it very Australian. It's sweetish, but not cloying, with fine old reedy, fennel-like tannins adding a little acrid edge to the finish. It's like a leathery old sock. You could drink it with chevre, or snaky delta blues.

www.bleasdale.com.au

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www.bleasdale.com.au



Cleggett Shalstin White Cabernet 2006
 \$15; 13.5% alcohol; screw cap; 90 points

This wine made My Picks once before; this time it stood tall enough among its rivals to become my current favourite Larnck white. Made from a strain of cabernet that gradually lost its pigment between 1977 and 1991, it's almost like a good arneis, with a pleasant, appetising, acrid phosphate and flint edge to its clean, zippy, gingery fruit. Great with ginger chilli chicken, or drunken chicken.

www.cleggettwin.com.au



Bleasdale Frank Potts 2004
 \$28.30; 14.5% alcohol; cork; 90+ points

On paper, a blend of cabernet sauvignon (67%), malbec (18%) and petit verdot (18%) would add up to a fairly racy modern Bordeaux blend. But this is sheer traditional Larnck floodplain red, with moody layers of mossy damp earth, straw mushroom, and shitake in a deep beef consommé. It may be old-fashioned mudcake, but it's what Langhorne Creek is all about. Boef bourguignon.

www.bleasdale.com.au



Bremerton Tamblyn 2005
 \$19; 14.5% alcohol; screwcap and cork; 90+ points

Cabernet sauvignon (50%), shiraz (38%), malbec (7%) and merlot (5%) make up this classic modern Larnck mudplucker. Like many of the floodplain vineyards have done, it shows the distinctive fennel/anise/Choo Choo Bar aromas of the river bank vegetation, but in a racy wrapping of modern oak, so those aromas gradually descend into a juicy, fruitsweet palate of finesse and balance.

www.bremerton.com.au



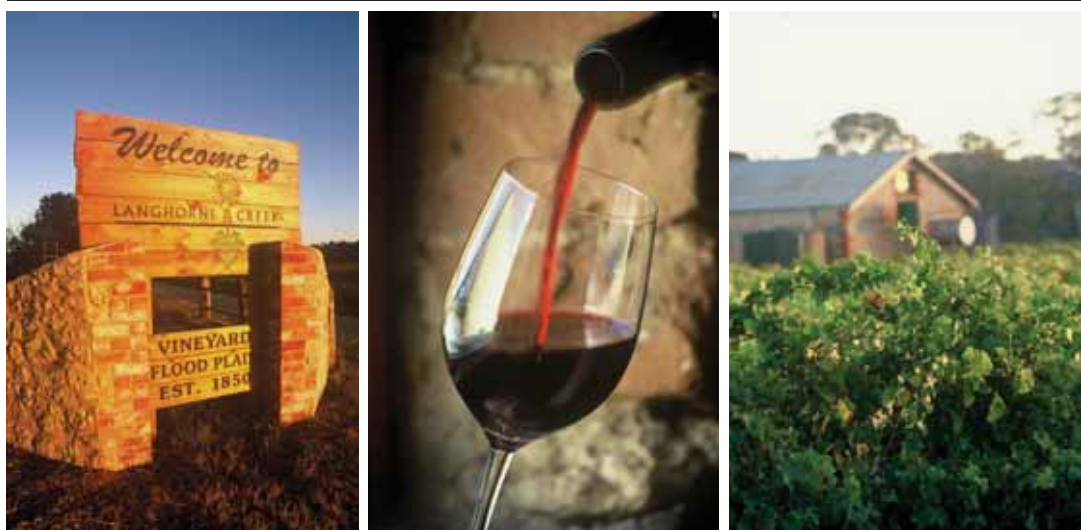
Ben Potts Shiraz 2003
 \$32; 15.5% alcohol; cork; 90+ points

From traditional floodplain vineyards and a dry year, this rather authoritative heavy seems to involve the best of both old and new worlds. It doesn't really show all that alcohol, but rather gives a tight, compact whiff of the old blackberry mudcake, all wrapped up in fine, hard-grained oak. It's beautifully balanced, and will bloom delightfully in the dungeon, or with venison now.

www.benpottswines.com.au



LANGHORNE CREEK WINEMAKERS SHOWCASE TASTING Saturday 5th May 2007



Rare opportunity to taste up to 120 Langhorne Creek wines and chat to local identities.

Time: 12pm to 4pm
 Entry: \$10 per person
 Enjoy: Taste up to 120 wines
 Venue: Langhorne Creek Memorial Hall

The Langhorne Creek Winemakers Association annually hosts the Langhorne Creek Winemakers Showcase. An independent panel of judges are given the task of tasting the entries and selecting the top wine in each class. The Showcase Tasting will highlight the exceptional quality and diverse range of wines being produced in the region and give the rare opportunity for consumers to taste the wines in one location.

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For more details contact 8537 3362 or visit www.langhornewine.com.au

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Palate

Our guide to your region.

McLaren Vale

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 OPEN SAT TO SUN: 11AM - 5PM
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 (SE FREEWAY, MT BARKER EXIT TO NAIRNE)
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Gourmet weekend opening times.
 Saturday 5th May 10am-5pm - tastings and sales
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Cabernet Sauvignon White Cabernet Sauvignon Shalstin Bronze Cabernet Sauvignon Malian

Nature gifted it to us for your enjoyment - Treat your friends to a new wine experience

Visit our cellar door on the main road at Langhorne Creek and try our two new Australian grape varieties
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