

KAESLER



Old Bastard Shiraz 2008

2008 represents the 115th harvest for the Old Bastard vineyard and the 10th for our Viticulturalist Nigel van der Zande with his hands on the reins. The vineyard has come a long way in those ten years. It would be fair to say that in 1998 it was in a critical state with a dozen or more vines dying every year. The infection from Eutypa exceeded 70% of all vines and a diet of salty bore water was only giving the dreaded "Dead Arm" curse more of an opportunity to wield its sneaky assassination on the vineyard. In short, the entire vineyard was on death row. A bleak but undeniable reality.

Fortunately we live in times where sustainability and greener approaches to farming are accepted and to a large extent expected, despite the fact that more effort seems to be placed on marketing organic than actual implementation. Our situation was difficult because although we could correct some of the issues such as salinity and soil health, the real issue was inside the vine, its battle with the toxins metabolised by Eutypa. It appeared that the only way to assist the vines in dealing with this was to make them healthier, and the only real way to do this was through improving soil health and providing the vines with a more diverse range of complex nutrients. Our path down the green road had begun. I must stress that we are not organic or biodynamic, we are Kaesler, the green thieves, and we use the bits that we believe are suitable for our needs and for the health of the plant. It's not perfect but it fits for now.

The 2008 season was always going to be a leaner one as three years of drought and its effect throughout the 2007 season left a meagre selection of pruning choices. The growing season other than that was positive. Small yields, eventuated in an earlier than normal harvest commencement. The early part of February was punctuated with a mini heat wave that encouraged us to pick earlier than normal, when that heat subsided many others cancelled their picking dates. As we had already seen our earlier ferments and were pleased, we forged on. This was indeed a grand decision as three weeks later the mother of all heat waves set in and an unprecedented 16 days of 40degree plus weather pushed the region well beyond its means and limits. We had most of our fruit off and an empty winery when it struck and one last fill saw us complete an early and successful harvest. What fruit did remain in the heat has already been sold as bulk wine. Good luck or good management? I'll take both, and the vineyard guys can take a pat on the back for preparing themselves for a situation that may indeed become normal season.

Colour: Really really red

Nose: Black Cherries, red currants, and obligatory blueberry, blackberry and plum. The oak leaves a thread of spice and scented smoke throughout the nose and palate. It's a bit woody and austere at the moment, and that's a good thing for the future

Palate: The wine works its way to the centre of the palate very quickly; from there it radiates a quick pulse of tight, focussed glycerol, though not sweet or cloying. The tannin succeeds it, with powdery high pixel density, which slowly gives way to a broader warm vintage style of tannin. The finish at this stage is toasty, with a Campari style bitterness which is a little awkward but contributes to the length of the wine and will help its structure immensely as it ages. Give it years.

Notes:

The 2008 vintage I suspect, may be slammed by some of the general (ising) all encompassing press which will try to capture a vintage report in a few column inches. The Barossa being diverse in terroir and vine age will have some gems but be careful, it was a tricky year. I think the 2008 Old Bastard captures a really nice side to the season.

Reid Bosward
Winemaker

