

Getting a taste for the best of the very best

ONE of Australia's most famous family wineries, Brown Brothers, was founded in 1885 when John Francis Brown planted his first vineyard on the edge of the tiny north-east Victorian hamlet of Milawa.

More than 125 years on Brown Brothers continues to be owned and operated by his direct descendants on the original property.

The Browns now have considerable investments in Tasmania, having bought Tamar Ridge and associated labels.

The Brown Brothers range probably features more grape varieties and wine styles than any winery in Australia, while other members of the Brown family operate the All Saints and St Leonard's wineries.

In 2003, Brown Brothers marked a significant new chapter in their history with the release of a new flagship range of wines, named Patricia in honour of the late family matriarch.

Ross Brown and his wife Judy launched the new Patricia wines at a special dinner at The Terrace Restaurant at Country Club Tasmania earlier this month and it was a splendid occasion with food to match the aged Patricia releases.

The Patricia wines are only made in exceptional years and are released when at their peak.

"These are the best wines we can possibly make — and are only put on the market when better than excellent," Ross Brown said.

"The new chardonnay release, for instance, is our first for five years.



Winsor Dobbin
Off The Vine

"It is great to not only be able to showcase these wines, but also celebrate our new engagement with Tasmania, about which we are very excited. We are looking forward to a long and rewarding association."

The Patricia 2005 Pinot Noir and Chardonnay Brut (\$45) was paired with three delightful seafood nibbles and showed freshness and a good mousse with hints of aged character just peeking through. Citrus and brioche are evident on the palate along with some good acid.

The Patricia 2008 Chardonnay (\$40) has classic nutty/stone fruit characters but I felt the oak was little intrusive and this wine needs time. It was served alongside a sublime hot-smoked trout ensemble.

The two reds; a Patricia 2006 Shiraz (\$60), served with lamb, and the Patricia 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (\$60), served with scotch fillet, were both outstanding, the shiraz intense and supple and the cabernet beautifully structured (see review below).

Several other wines were served during the night, including from Pirie and Tamar Ridge presented by Andrew Pirie, but the final Patricia wine was the 2006 Noble Riesling (\$35), a stunning

'These are the best wines we can possibly make — and are only put on the market when better than excellent'



Ross Brown talks about his company's flagship Patricia label.

aromatic and concentrated dessert wine that was released two years ago and just keeps improving in the bottle.

"We've seen many changes, but the cornerstones of Brown Brothers remain constant," Brown says. "We are still a family business and we are still hand-crafting the wines."

Cape adventure

ROB Dundon has been making wine for almost 35 years, but the Cape Barren label is a new venture for him.

Dundon, formerly chief red winemaker for Thomas Hardy in McLaren Vale, created the Beresford and Step Road brands.

He and viticulturist Tom Adams, previously with Brothers in Arms, purchased the Cape Barren business in early 2010 and have major plans for expansion.

Dundon visited Tasmania recently, hosting tastings and dinners at Mud in Launceston and Smolt in Hobart, to introduce the wines to the local market.

The Cape Barren brand was launched in 1999 and reds are sourced from McLaren Vale and whites from the cooler Adelaide Hills, just a short drive away.

The range comprises the Old Vine 2007 Reserve Selection Shiraz (\$40+); three wines under the Native Goose label, a 2008 shiraz, a 2009 grenache, shiraz, mourvedre blend and a 2009 chardonnay (\$25) with a 2010 sauvignon blanc semillon blend (with a dash of verdelho) bearing the moniker Silly Goose (\$20).

Pick of the Crop



Brown Brothers Patricia Cabernet Sauvignon \$60

A VERY classy wine this; superb fruit; subtle oak and great structure all play their part.

Grapes have been sourced from cooler-climate regions throughout Victoria (the King Valley, Mornington Peninsula, Pyrenees and Beechworth all contributed) and the end result is a wine that is growing into its skin with sweet, intense fruit, concentrated flavours with hints of cedar and spice, but most of all great structure and elegance.

A great match for steak dishes.

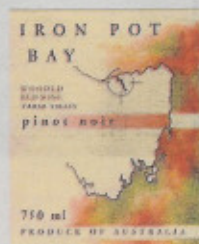


Brook Eden 2010 Pinot Gris \$25 CD

THIS Pipers Brook winery goes quietly about its business, specialising in aromatic whites but making some pretty impressive wines across the board.

This one took my fancy at a recent tasting; it is pinkish-grey coloured with some poached fruit aromas and a powerful palate with rich flavours of spices, honey and stone fruit.

It is unashamedly on the Alsace side of the flavour spectrum with plenty of length but has a nice fresh finish.



Iron Pot Bay 2009 River Block Pinot Noir \$26 CD

SOME pinots noir are complex and demanding, asking questions of the drinker. Others are simpler and delightfully easy to drink. This falls very much into the second category but is no less worthy for that. It is a very pleasant wine indeed with French oak providing a classic backbone. So enticing was it that my wife demanded a second glass soon after I had poured her first, complaining of an evaporation problem. Soft, savoury and very slurpable, this is an excellent Tamar Valley pinot.



Tahbilk 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon \$25

AN extremely classy cabernet from the Nagambie Lakes region of Central Victoria, this offers seriously good drinking at a very reasonable price.

The wine was fermented in open oak vats and then matured in French oak for 18 months before bottling. Blackberry, mushroom and mint characters co-exist harmoniously on the palate and there is a tannin structure (and a history) that suggests the wine will cellar well. Plenty of length. Plenty of flavour. Very easy to drink.



To reach a wide group of prospective buyers, make Drive a part of your marketing mix.

At Drive.com.au and in The Examiner, every Saturday.

1300 306 222

EXAMINER
Your news never goes to sleep

Drive

THE SUNDAY EXAMINER MAGAZINE, July 24, 2011 — C15