

# Halliday

WINE COMPANION



THE BESTSELLING AND DEFINITIVE  
GUIDE TO AUSTRALIAN WINE

## Best Value Winery

### Best's Wines

Many years ago, a basic algorithm was created that took into account the price of each wine being reviewed for the *Wine Companion* and the points it received to automatically add a 'special value' rosette at the end of its tasting note. It took out of play an emotional reaction that caused me to write 'good value' or 'great value' as part of a tasting note. Viewed in isolation, these words were reasonable; the problem was that they were influenced by a whole host of things that could impinge on the fairness or otherwise of the remarks. Shortly put, it wasn't consistent. The system was in play long before the band of tasters for the *Wine Companion* came on board; had it not been, the need for the algorithm would have been even more acute. Whatever one may think of the system, it has never led to complaints by winemakers or consumers.

You may say that the Best Value Winery should be that which collects the highest number of rosettes, or the highest strike rate. Both are important, but in this case there are yet other important factors that should be taken into account, and this year's winner has loads of them.

Best's Wines has a 154-year history with only two families involved, the current Thomson family for exactly 100 years, with the business having been established by Henry Best in 1868.

It has 1.2ha of pinot meunier planted in 1867, with 141 vines of pinot noir randomly interplanted at the same time. These are respectively the oldest plantings of the two varieties in the world, as phylloxera destroyed those in France (Burgundy and Champagne) and elsewhere in Europe. Best's pinot meunier was part of generic red blends until a large crop in 1967 led to its vinification as a single variety – a practice only then gaining traction in Australia. The fact that the currently available 2019 vintage is only \$100 is fantastic, unbeatable value.

Ben Thomson and his father, Viv, would also likely point to the \$25 price tag for the core range of 2019 Riesling, 2019 Pinot Noir, 2018 Shiraz, 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon and 2019 Dolcetto, all given 95 points by either Jane Faulkner or me. I haven't attempted a forensic search but can't remember a five-core-varietal band coming up so consistently.

The secret is the Grampians climate (and soils). The red wines in particular have cool-grown finesse, length and freshness draped over warm-grown structure, the varietal flavours speaking with utmost clarity. If I wanted to grow medium-bodied red wines with a 30-year future, I'd head to the Grampians.

*Previous Best Value Winery recipients were Hoddles Creek Estate (2015), West Cape Howe (2016), Larry Cherubino Wines (2017), Grosset (2018), Provenance (2019) and Domaine Naturaliste (2020).*