

EST. 1847

# TURKEY FLAT VINEYARDS

TANUNDA — BAROSSA VALLEY

## VINEYARD PHILOSOPHY

*We want our vineyards to be in balance with their surrounds, only requiring the most minimum of inputs as each season dictates.*

Patterns and variations in climate each year are now the basis of our vineyard management. Changing climatic conditions are predicted to significantly impact what have become traditional grape growing practices in the Barossa Valley. Our climate is predicted to become hotter and drier with rainfall becoming more unpredictable. Potential changes to rainfall include more extreme heavy rain at times resulting in increased erosion. Rainfall during critical growth periods for vines will be less reliable and it will be more challenging to access quality supplementary sources. The performance of our vineyards will be a reflection of our ability to create resilience in response to these changing landscape conditions. At Turkey Flat we are constantly refining our management practices to best suit the challenges ahead.

*The quality of the grapes at the winery and the health of our vineyards and soils dictate our decisions rather than the aesthetic appearance of our vineyards.*

We aim to optimise ecological systems rather than treat our vineyards as a monoculture. Using natural influences to control both vegetative growth and yield is central to this. An example of this would be reduced growth in plants in response to fluctuations in rainfall and changes in temperature. As a result our canopy management is minimal and generally only used to help the vine's structure in high wind. More typical management instead increases growth, leading to a need to trim excess growth or opening up canopies. Our yields are much smaller than our neighbours. Never overloading the vine gives us confidence that fruit will ripen well no matter what challenges the growing season presents.

*Central to our philosophy is building organic carbon and nitrogen levels within our vineyards.*

Organic carbon acts as a buffer for a vineyard, soaking up rain in the wet times and retaining the moisture for dry times, an important factor in an increasingly unstable climate. With higher organic carbon comes greater biodiversity, creating more complex ecological systems which in turn are more stable. Past management practices have led to unintentional soil degradation in vineyards. New practices, including applications of organic mulch under-vine, organic fertilisers mid-row and a strong emphasis on cover crop management have all become integral in our quest to restore soil health.

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*We now boast permanent cover crops in all our vineyards.*

Cover crops can shift the vineyard from a monoculture to a managed ecosystem. Mixtures of self-seeding medics, native grass and sub-clover have proven to be most successful cover crops within our vineyards. The native grass grows quickly at the turn of winter, suppressing undesirable weeds whilst the medics and sub-clovers prosper in late winter/spring. They naturally fix nitrogen from the atmosphere and provide further weed suppression from spring rains. In tandem they are carbon and nitrogen positive and create a layered and biodiverse soil structure. Their root systems open up the soil, reversing the symptoms of compaction. Permanent cover-crops require far less tractor work, reducing our diesel use and carbon footprint. We do not cultivate at Turkey Flat, rather we roll our cover crops in spring. This protects the soil from both wind and water erosion. Rolling, as opposed to slashing or cultivating, retains the structure of the winter growth, protecting it from desiccation in the harsh Barossa summers whilst further suppressing undesirable weeds in summer rains. We liken our cover-crop/topsoil to the human skin; it protects from the elements, holding together and helping to promote life beneath it.

*The Barossa Valley is low in potential disease threat, and this is reflected in our disease management program.*

Our spray regime is minimal. We fertigate with organic kelp extract to help the vines natural defence mechanisms as well as add and aid uptake of nutrients. Our current practices are very close to most practices of organic viticulture, although we do not want to restrict our practices by obtaining organic status. We want to have all options available when trying to improve each of our individual blocks, looking for the most efficient and environmentally light-footed way to improve our vineyards. Cultivation and heavy copper sprays (both practiced in organics) are incongruous with our vineyard philosophy, as they work against our ecological aims. Turkey Flat is home to some of the oldest vines in the world. We aim to retain these vines for the longest lifespan possible.

*As current custodians of our land we will only deliver an acceptable return with sustainably grown quality produce.*

We've come far in the last few years in changing our vineyard practices. The Australian landscape has been significantly damaged by agriculture beginning with the loss of unique, integral native environments. We believe that viticulture can be a force for positive change in land management. The results from both critics and wine shows are testament to the value and success of the changes we are making. All future changes we make in the vineyard will be focused on increasing the health of our vineyard and will ripple through to the quality of the wine we make from it.

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