

THE WEST AUSTRALIAN FRESH

## Drinks Vic Crossland & Ray Jordan

# Wicks' formula bears fruit

**E**ven for a maths dunderhead like me, whichever way I looked at all the possible variables for Wicks Estate, the numbers just seemed to add up.

For instance, the Wicks family, who began this Adelaide Hills operation in 1999, have had a long and successful association with orchard and nursery operations, so they know the fickleness of the land and how to succeed.

The site they chose in the Adelaide Hills has a similar aspect to other successful vineyards in the region, bringing the flexibility that a little extra warmth can introduce to cool climates such as this. I think this choice of site is one of the secrets to the quality of the wines, which show excellent ripeness and fruit intensity across the range, while retaining an elegance and refinement from the cool-climate viticulture.

The varieties they planted are commercially savvy and popular, while well suited to the region, and in winemaker Tim Knappstein, a pioneer of the Adelaide Hills, they couldn't have chosen better.

As well, the early releases just starting to reach WA are not only very good quality but exceptionally well priced. So often, I see producers wheel out their first vintages at exorbitant prices that cannot be justified on quality or pedigree.

Wicks has released a solid range for between \$15 and \$20 with one quite outstanding blended red selling for \$55 that I am happy to accept — given its quality and limited super premium status.

The outstanding wines in the core range are the Wicks Estate Riesling 2005 (\$15) and sauvignon blanc 2006 (\$16) in the whites and the cabernet sauvignon 2005 (\$20) in the reds.

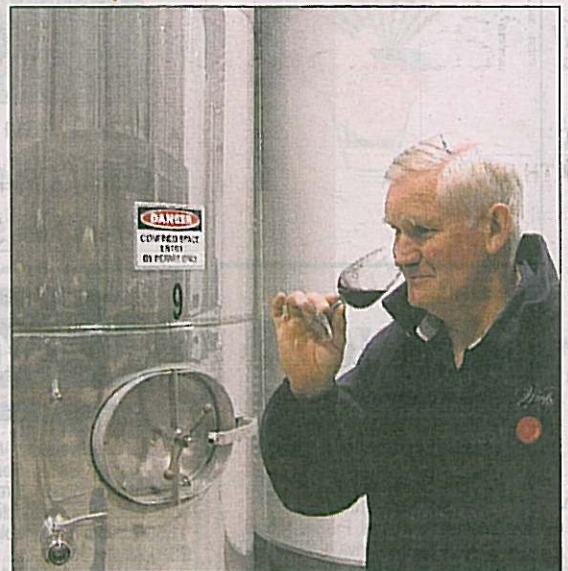
The riesling is all dry and zesty with a delightful floral mineral character, while the softish acid makes for lovely early drinking. The sauvignon blanc is quite restrained and yet has tremendous length and persistence with a lovely precise, crunchy mouth feel. This more subtle expression of sav blanc is where I think the variety should be in Oz, leaving those other fruit bombs to New Zealand.

The cabernet sauvignon 2005 is an absolute cracker showing generous fruit. It has great balance and a beautiful perfume emerging from the mix of redcurrant and mint with seductive cherry and violet overtones. The palate is sublimely silky.

You won't find many better-value cabernets of this class. The peppery spicy shiraz 2005 and fruit-driven cabernet merlot 2004 also are excellent value at \$20.

And if you want to push the envelope, check out The Eminence shiraz cabernet 2005 (\$55), a powerful and stylish blend showing exceptional depth.

If your local liquor outlet doesn't have this label, pressure it to get some. Damn fine stuff.



Master at work: Wicks winemaker Tim Knappstein.



## MILLION-DOLLAR CELLAR ON THE LINE

In one of Australia's biggest wine auctions, GraysOnline ([www.graysonline.com.au](http://www.graysonline.com.au)) puts more than \$1 million of wine on its site on behalf of the liquidators of Heritage Fine Wines. The collection of wines from Heritage Fine Wines, which ceased trading in March 2005, is extraordinary in its depth and breadth and every bottle will be offered unreserved with a \$9 starting price.