



2009 BROKENWOOD SEMILLON

Brokenwood is a past master at producing semillons which drink wonderfully well in their youth, and fill the gap between current vintage and the four- and five-year-old releases down the track. Pale straw-green, the wine has a delicate, flowery bouquet, hinting at what is to come on the vivid palate, with citrus to the fore, and background touches of stone fruit. Screwcap. 11% alc. **Rating:** 94 **Drink:** To 2014 **Price:** \$20



2007 BROKENWOOD GRAVEYARD SHIRAZ

The only rainfall of any significance fell in September 2006 (133mm), with 30mm following in November. From there on it was a dry and early vintage, with low yields similar to 1998. Deep purple-crimson, it proclaims its breed and quality from the first whiff, overflowing with black fruits, tannins and oak in support. It will slowly gain notes of earth, briar and polished leather as it develops in bottle, the screwcap giving it an indefinite lifespan. 13.5% alc. **Rating:** 96 **Drink:** To 2050 **Price:** \$140



2008 BROKENWOOD INDIGO VINEYARD CHARDONNAY

Brokenwood was the prime mover in establishing the Indigo Vineyard in Beechworth and has had greatest success with the chardonnay. The 2008 is the best yet: the expressive fruit from the Dijon clone component has been enhanced, not obscured, by barrel fermentation in a mix of new and older French oak; the wine has impeccable balance and length. Screwcap. 14% alc. **Rating:** 95 **Drink:** To 2014 **Price:** \$30

○ If Brokenwood had not purchased what is now known as the Graveyard Vineyard from Hungerford Hill in 1978, it is highly possible the vines would have been abandoned and the land returned to scrappy scrub. That is what happened to other nearby vineyards (some just across the road) which had been planted in the Hunter Valley's boom days of 1968 on poor, acidic clay soils, low in nutrients.

For Brokenwood, the price was right, and the vineyard was next door to the winery. But a long, slow process of rehabilitation of the vines and the soil coaxed the vineyard into providing yields of little more than one tonne per acre of shiraz. After Iain Riggs' arrival prior to the 1983 vintage the process of improving the soil increased, the cossetting of the vines likewise. **THE FIRST VINTAGE NAMED GRAVEYARD SHIRAZ WAS 1983, BUT IT WAS THE 1986 VINTAGE THAT LAID THE FOUNDATION FOR WHAT IS NOW ONE OF THE TEN BEST-KNOWN SHIRAZES IN AUSTRALIA.**

That is only half the story. Two weak blocks of shiraz had been replanted in the early '80s with cabernet sauvignon, and later on, three other blocks were planted with chardonnay. The cabernet was removed by 1990 and replanted the following year with commercially sourced shiraz clone 1654, as was a poor block of old shiraz at the extreme south of the vineyard. But by 2000 it was clear that the 1654 clone shiraz was not going to produce wine of sufficient quality to be included in the Graveyard Shiraz.

The cycle of birth, death and renewal intensified. In 2000 the first block of chardonnay was pulled out, and the following year was replanted with cuttings from the old (1968) shiraz – which had itself been sourced from McWilliam's Old Hill Block planted in the 1880s. Within five years the superiority of the old vine clone (over clone 1654) was so marked it was clearly destined for Graveyard standard. So immediately after the 2005 vintage, the second block of chardonnay was removed and replanted with old vine shiraz cuttings.

The last block of chardonnay was also taken out in 2005. Fascinated by the interplay between clone and site, rootlings from Brokenwood's two McLaren Vale shiraz suppliers (Rayner and Wade), from Seville Estate in the Yarra Valley, and from the Graveyard itself were planted in 2007.

It will be several years before the outcome of those plantings will be known, but this year the southern block of clone 1654 was removed and replanted with old vine Graveyard cuttings. I have the feeling the cycle is yet to run its course: the remaining two clone 1654 blocks may be living on borrowed time. ●