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A breakdown of Brokenwood

- 1970 – Sydney solicitors James Halliday, Tony Albert and John Beeston band together to buy 4 hectares of land in the foothills of the Brokenback Mountain Range in New South Wales. After clearing the land of timber, they name the vineyard Brokenwood.
- 1971 – The trio plant shiraz and cabernet sauvignon vines.
- 1973 – The vineyard's first harvest produces 75 dozen bottles of Hermitage Cabernet Sauvignon.
- 1975 – A new winery, equipped with fermentation tanks and oak barrels, and accommodation is built at the Brokenwood property.
- 1978 – The original partners ask six long-term helpers to join the company, and they purchase the neighbouring block, Graveyard Vineyard.
- 1979 – Brokenwood launches its first wine with fruit sourced from another region – the 1978 Hunter Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon Hermitage.
- 1983 – The business partners sign up their first employee, Roseworthy graduate Iain Riggs, and build a new insulated winery with better facilities for white wine production.
- 1984 – With the release of the first red wine from the Graveyard Vineyard, mailing list members are invited to lunch at the winery for the launch – a tradition that has continued since then as The Graveyard Launch Weekend.
- 1992 – Drought stops any fruit from being picked from 5ha of shiraz vines at the Graveyard Vineyard.
- 1993 – Keith Barry is appointed as the company's first and only vineyard manager.
- 2003 – The company releases its first wines from its Indigo Vineyard at Beechworth, Victoria.
- 2004 – A new barrel shed, which allows high quality controlled wine maturation, is built. Chardonnay vines are removed altogether from the Graveyard Vineyard, leaving it solely as a shiraz site, and all wines are sealed with screwcaps rather than cork.
- 2006 – The Albert Room, a tasting and function room named after the late Tony Albert, opens.

Quality incentives lure consumers to
BROKENWOOD



While Graveyard Shiraz is Brokenwood's flagship wine, the company has an extensive range which also includes the multi-regional Cricket Pitch series that sits at the more competitive end of the market.

In an environment where it is difficult for smaller wine producers to compete with larger companies on price, Brokenwood Wines' incentive has been to over-deliver on quality.

The Hunter Valley based company produces 75,000 cases of wine each year, and winemaker PJ Charteris says it makes quality its selling point, regardless of price point.

"If people are prepared to spend an extra dollar or two in the price category, we want to ensure they are getting really good quality," he said.

"All the wines we make we like to over-deliver in terms of quality; we aim to be at the top in our price point at each end of the market."

Brokenwood's first vines were planted in

By RENEE DE CICCIO



1971 by three Sydney solicitors – James Halliday, Tony Albert and John Beeston – on a block in the foothills of the Brokenback Ranges that was originally intended to be a cricket ground for the local community.

From the company's first harvest in 1973, where grapes were carried to the winery in buckets in a car boot, to premium fruit sourcing from 1979, to achieving accolades for its 1999 Rayner Shiraz at the International Wine Challenge in 2001, Brokenwood has gone from strength to strength.

The company is best known for wines from its Graveyard Vineyard, which is now planted exclusively to shiraz. But PJ

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says multi-regional blends are just as important to Brokenwood's product range as its single region wines.

"I guess the important thing in our company portfolio is that we don't have all our eggs in one basket," he said.

As well as the Hunter Valley, Brokenwood uses fruit from Orange and Cowra in New South Wales, Beechworth in Victoria and McLaren Vale in South Australia.

While Graveyard Shiraz is its flagship wine, PJ says the company strives for quality and consistency throughout its wine range, which includes the multi-regional Cricket Pitch series that sits at the more competitive end of the market.

"When you are making a wine at \$15 to \$20 [a bottle], the economics of that dictate where you can get your fruit from," he said.

"For us, blending becomes pretty important in terms of maintaining that quality and maintaining consistency in that

- KEY POINTS**
- 75,000 cases produced annually
 - Famous for its Graveyard Shiraz
 - Semillon shows strong regionality

brand."

PJ says there is a strong sense of regionality in Hunter Valley wines, particularly in the region's renowned semillon.

"The styles that the Hunter Valley makes best are really a strong reflection of the influence that the environment has made on the winemaker," he said.

"It has regionality; the styles have a very strong terroir, but you can't express the effects of soil and climate in wine unless you have an interpretation from the person.

"So the way that people interpret the conditions they have will come through in the wine, and we have such interesting influences from the environment.

"Soil, weather, growing conditions; that has had a really strong impact on the way that humans have looked at wine styles."

PJ says the 2009 vintage has been one of the best seasons for semillon production at Brokenwood.

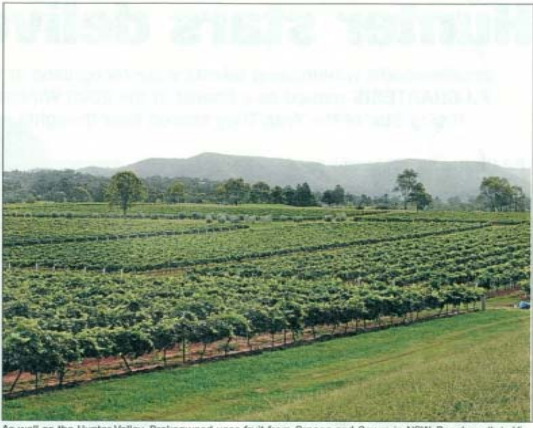
"We had a great season for semillon growing," he said.

"In my 10 years in the [Hunter] Valley, I haven't come across a semillon vintage that has been as rewarding in terms of the fact that the wines made themselves to a certain degree. The fresh quality was so strong that it would have been hard to stuff it up."

Capping off the season, PJ and Brokenwood assistant winemaker Sarah Crowe were both recognised at the Hunter Valley Legends and Wine Industry Awards in late May.

PJ was named as a finalist in the 2009 Winemaker of the Year category, while Sarah earned the title of Rising Star of the Year.

Details: Brokenwood Wines 02 4998 7559, brokenwood.com.au



As well as the Hunter Valley, Brokenwood uses fruit from Orange and Cowra in NSW, Beechworth in Vic and McLaren Vale in SA.



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Hunter stars deliver winemaking passion

Brokenwood's winemaking talents were recognised at the Hunter Valley Legends and Wine Industry Awards in May, with winemaker **PJ CHARTERIS** named as a finalist in the 2009 Winemaker of the Year category and assistant winemaker **SARAH CROWE** crowned Rising Star of the Year. They shared their thoughts on winemaking and the Australian industry with *GrapeGrowers & Vignerons*

PJ Charteris, winemaker

What are the strengths of Australia's wine industry?

Simultaneously, Australia has a traditional, 'hands on' mentality where nothing is a problem, while technology and research are openly embraced. The other great strength is the sense of community – people are very willing to share ideas. I think this has been the great secret of the industry.

What excites you most about winemaking?

Making and drinking great wine, the diversity and lifestyle.

Which aspects cause the most frustration?

In order to make great wine you need to understand great wine. To understand great wine you need to drink great wine, which is great in itself but financing that, now that's frustrating.

What is your favourite wine variety to make and drink, and why?

An open ended question and the drinking bit, that depends on the time of day. Different wine styles offer different challenges and rewards. The purity of a great semillon or riesling is only equaled by the complexity of great chardonnay or pinot noir.

What are the drawbacks of the Hunter Valley wine region?

Apart from the relatively mild climate and proximity to good surf, the challenges the environment throws at you mean you are always thinking and evolving as a winemaker. Hunter semillon and shiraz are such unique and terrior driven wine styles – their mere existence is a magnet.

What is the best thing about working for Brokenwood?

We have always had a strong team focus and when the going gets tough, the team goes harder. We achieve a lot with a small crew because of that strength. Once you have been a part of that team, you will always be an ambassador for Brokenwood. We have spies planted all through the wine industry.

If it wasn't winemaking, which career path would you be following?

It's hard to think about life without wine, its such an important part of humanity, so whether I was a pro surfer or a librarian, wine would have to be involved. Pro surfing would be good though.

Sarah Crowe, assistant winemaker

What are the strengths of the Australian wine industry?

We are not bound by tradition, therefore we can make decisions based on producing the best product rather than what our forefathers produced. Also, the enthusiasm of Australian winemakers to travel and explore the regions of the world, and try anything they learn back home.

What excites you most about winemaking?

The finished product; watching people enjoy a wine you had a hand in making is extremely satisfying.

Which aspects cause the most frustration?

Anything you can't control, like the weather.

What is your favourite wine variety to make and drink, and why?

A very difficult question but at the moment it would have to be pinot noir. A good one is pretty but with many layers.

What are the drawbacks of the Hunter Valley?

The semillon we produce is unique – no other country or region in Australia can produce this wine style – plus it [the Hunter] is a really pretty place, especially the sunsets at this time of the year.

What is the best thing about working for Brokenwood?

We get to play with a lot of different grape varieties – the usual suspects, but also new varieties to Australia such as viognier, nebbiolo, and much more.

If you weren't a winemaker, which career path would you be following?

I would still work in the horticulture industry – I believe it was my path to winemaking. It all started when I came to Brokenwood to prune grapevines one winter a long time ago.



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