

Town & Country Leader

FINE WINE Award gives Brokenwood the fruits of their labour

History of an Iconic Brand

By Julie Hartigan

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History of an iconic brand

Brokenwood Wines was founded in 1970 by a trio of Sydney-based solicitors with a passion for wine – Tony Albert, John Beeston and James Halliday.

Together they built an iconic Australian brand, and a benchmark wine with their Hunter Shiraz.

By 1975, a new winery was required to accommodate the growing production and the exhausted bodies of the many helpers who came to stay at Brokenwood.

Chief winemaker and managing director Iain Riggs joined Brokenwood in 1982 with a commitment to produce single vineyard wines.

His skills in white winemaking revolutionised Brokenwood and a year into his tenure production levels changed to 70 per cent white wine and 30 per cent red (including the inaugural vintage of Graveyard Shiraz).

In the 1990s, Riggs began to explore other premium regions to follow the single vineyard philosophy.

Orange was an obvious choice for chardonnay – widely recognised as one of Australia's premium cool climate regions.



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When conditions produce the perfect grape, it is the winemaker's duty to treat that grape with the utmost care.

That's the philosophy of Hunter Valley winemaker PJ Charteris (pictured above) who is behind the 2007 Brokenwood Forest Edge Orange Chardonnay, which has just been named NSW Wine of the Year.

The fruit for the wine was grown in a single vineyard in the cool climates of Orange and transported to Brokenwood Wines in the Hunter Valley for processing.

"We pick the fruit and pop it into a coldroom while we keep picking

REGION'S TOP DROPS

- NSW Wine of the Year and Best Young Chardonnay: Brokenwood 2007 Forest Edge Chardonnay
- Best Young Semillon: Hungerford Hill 2007 Semillon
- Best Mature Dry White: Allandale 2003 Semillon
- Best Young Shiraz: Ridgeview 2006 Generations Reserve Shiraz

through the day," Mr Charteris said.

The fruit is transported overnight to Brokenwood, where it is unloaded into another coldroom.

"I like to get the fruit nice and cold before I get it into the press," Mr Charteris said. "Having it cold preserves the flavours in the fruit and slows any oxidation.

"It's about being as gentle as

possible and preventing any degradation of the subtle fruit flavours."

Mr Charteris said it was the climatic conditions that set the 2007 vintage, including the Forest Edge chardonnay, apart from other years.

"The weather was very kind to us in '07," he said. "It wasn't too hot or too cool, which meant a very good ripen-

ing pattern. That's how you get the right flavours. When you do get the right conditions to produce a good wine, it's important you look after it."

The 2007 Brokenwood Forest Edge Chardonnay was described by the judges as "classic", "impressive" and "Brokenwood white at its best".

Wild ferment characters and char oak combine to give a complex start, while tropical fruit, mango and lime aromas give a strong fruit background.

Mr Charteris said he knew the wine had exceptional merit, but was still surprised at the industry honour.

"It's really good when a wine you enter in a competition stands up and is recognised against your peers," he said.