



amazing mornington

BY ROB GEDDES

Victoria's Mornington Peninsula is an amazing place for wine and holidays. It is well known to Melbournians as a cool retreat from the heat of summer, thanks to its location 1:45 hour's drive south of the city. It is also famous for its Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir.

With Port Phillip Bay on one side and Bass Strait on the other, it extends for 40 kilometres around the Red Hill region. Being diverse, it is also a great region for Chardonnay, Pinot Gris or Pinot Grigio, Pinot Noir and Shiraz at a variety of price points. Yet, being a relatively small area it is not well known out of Victoria.

Many of the producers are small and a number are closed each weekend so it is best to check ahead of time so that you can visit the most interesting wineries and eat in the best winery restaurants.

Mornington must be the happiest hunting ground for Pinot Noir in Australia with a multitude of styles. This district has the most consistent varietal Pinot Noir in Australia. Generally Pinot Noir in Mornington has very pretty aromas and flavours, sweet fruit and elegance without great depth of colour but lacking for nothing in terms of flavour. Stonier, Eldridge or Yabby Lake are fine examples, or try the fuller sweeter style at Paringa Estate.

Paringa Pinot Noir is typical of many in the district with fully ripe fruit and plenty of fruit sweetness, a full body

with red and black cherry flavours in a generous full flavoured style that is very appealing and age worthy while retaining its delicacy.

Main Ridge Estate, the first Mornington Peninsula maker to achieve commercial production in 1975, is exceptional. Their Half Acre Pinot is a regular on Qantas First Class, with raspberry and mulberry and dark cherry spectrum fruit. The Acre is a similar quality, if slightly lighter and more fragrant.

Chardonnay here is rarely high in alcohol and is amongst Australia's most delicious, with fresh elegant restrained lemon citrus fruit. Stonier, Eldridge Estate and Main Ridge offer exceptional richness as do Moorooduc or Miceli. Kooyong are very reliable and a visit to the new Port Phillip cellar door is a must for their wines and the views. Paringa Estate Chardonnays are big and full of sweet fruit and firm oak. It is a red wine drinker's Chardonnay but this is not a red wine styled Chardonnay.

Australia's earliest Pinot Gris and Pinot Grigio styles were made here.

It is interesting that it is the same variety in different styles. Today

Mornington is still an exceptional source across both styles from a number of makers at various price points including T'Gallant. Miceli is a consistent medal winner with his Pinot Grigio and Moorooduc Estate has recently introduced a delicious wine under their Garden Vineyard Pinot Gris label.

Currently Mornington Shiraz is winning impressive awards at capital city wine shows. Paringa Estate is perhaps the greatest exponent of this unique regional Australian style with beautiful aromas of savoury black pepper, smoked meats and charcuterie. They have smooth fully ripe flavours with blackberry fruit and white pepper spice on the finish. They are a passable look-alike to France's top wines but at a fraction of their exalted prices.

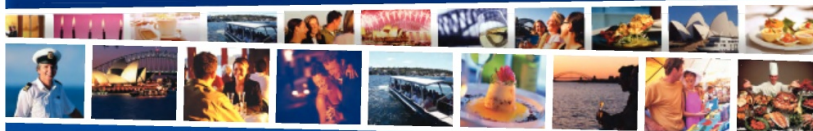
Paradigm Hill is one of the region's most interesting new producers. The family-owned winery is fastidiously seeking regional varietal expression with finesse and intensity under owner winemaker George Mihaly. Their Cols Block Shiraz is medium bodied, red currant and savoury white pepper, a long way from the full blooded Barossa style. These are age worthy wines with delicacy and nuance, yet giving nothing away.

Another new producer is Quealy which is the reinvention of Kathleen Quealy, an original thinker who with husband Kevin Mc Carthy, drove the arrival of Pinot Gris in the region at their winery T'Gallant. Now out on her own but helped by Kevin, who has stayed at T'Gallant, she offers a delightfully different take on the future of our white wines with her Quealy Pobblebonk (named after a frog's call) by blending Pinot Grigio, Chardonnay, Tocai Friulano and Riesling in a rich, nearly oily white wine with a malt, honey, funky and spicy palate. It's too much fun in one bottle, with great texture and concentration and a fusion of flavours.

Hang together or hang out - the Mornington mix of wine, cafes and restaurants, seas and sand in summer and golf in winter means there is something for everyone in what must be Australia's most beautiful wine region close to a capital city.

For more information on the Mornington Peninsula go to www.visitmorningtonpeninsula.org or www.visitvictoria.com

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