



VERY IMPORTANT PRODUCER

CHÂTEAU DU SEUIL

Château du Seuil lies 35 minutes from Bordeaux city, in Graves, Cerons, and is the smallest appellation in Bordeaux. Winemaker and producer Nicola Allison's parents moved to Bordeaux from Wales in the mid-1980s and she and her husband Sean moved there from New Zealand in 2001. "We came to give it a go for two years and nine years later we're still here," she says.

The wines

Allison says: "We make a Graves red and white wine from Château du Seuil vineyards, and also from Château l'Avocat in Cerons, which we purchased in 2002. We also have vineyards on the Right Bank, where we make Domaine du Seuil Premières Côtes de Bordeaux and Domaine du Seuil Bordeaux Blanc."

Philosophy

Allison believes the chateau's winemaking methods bring out the true expression of the terroir and variety. "You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear as my granny used to say," she says.

Vineyards and viticulture

In its second year of certified organic conversion, Allison believes it's the way ahead for all forms of agriculture, both from an ecological point of view and in terms of people's health.

Top People

Julien Galland, viticulturist/oenologist who used to be at Lafaurie-Peyraguey, and local oenologist Fabien Faget. Allison says: "No big names, but it's a very good team."

chateauduseuil.com

In association with the
International Wine Challenge

MERCHANT'S TASTE

AUSWINEONLINE.CO.UK

New to the online arena is Brian Oakwell who went to Western Australia in 2009 to do the 20km Perth to Rottnest ocean swim and came back with a wine business.

He has owned a specialist retail property agency for 20 years, buying shopping centres such as the Galleria in Hatfield, Hertfordshire, in 1993 for £10.5 million, and developing it as an outlet centre, then selling it in 2005 for £122.5 million. More recently he bought the Royal Quays outlet centre in Newcastle upon Tyne. "It's smaller than the Galleria, but we are having some fun with it in these difficult times," he says.

Philosophy

"I have always been interested in wines, especially Australian, and have had a cellar for some years, courtesy of my property successes," says Oakwell.

"I like the provenance aspect of wine; the idea of drinking it and knowing the vineyard

where the grapes were grown enhances the experience. He says he was initially introduced to a few wineries in Western Australia, then Victoria, and has since selected more small boutique-quality winemakers from those areas who were not represented in the UK.

Range and specialities

The list includes Flametree Margaret River Cabernet Merlot 2008 (£15) and Flametree Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2009 (£14) (which won the Margaret River Show's Best White Blend Trophy). Flametree's wines are included on the Qantas first class wine list.

"We also have a garagista winemaker, La Violetta, producing just 200 cases of their superb La Ciornia 2008 (Shiraz/Viognier rrp £30)," says Oakwell.

Victoria wines include Eldridge Estate of Red Hill, Mornington Peninsula's Pinot Noir (£40) and Chardonnay (£30).

Oakwell says he will add more small, boutique wineries as he goes and will act as an agent as well as importer.

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Setting up in the recession

"As a new business venture, we can see the potential, but it's still early days. To borrow a property term, we're all about quality, quality, quality. We are only interested in wines that punch above their weight, but offer really great value. At least we can always drink the wine if the sales disappoint – which is an advantage over a duff property deal."

Carol Emmas



Brian Oakwell favours high-quality Australian wines from small, boutique wineries