



## Winemaker Profile

### PAUL SMITH, Senior Winemaker

#### March 2010

Leading the tribe at Wirra Wirra doesn't just mean being in charge of making iconic wines of quality, style and character. It takes someone special to ring the ¾ tonne Angelus bell at the start and finish of every vintage and to show the new guys how to get the distance on your watermelon when launching the catapult. Luckily the Wirra Wirra tribe is led by Paul Smith (the winemaker... as opposed to the fashion designer) who is rather special and is quite handy at blending a grape or two as well.

Growing up in Adelaide, Smith has been surrounded by some of the country's greatest wine regions all his life but initially he was interested in agronomy, studying agricultural science at Roseworthy Agricultural College north of Adelaide. Completing his degree with honours, Smith's next step was to pursue a career as a vet but was sidetracked after taking a job as a vineyard hand at Chittering Estate in the North East of Swan Valley in West Australia.

This first job among the vines saw Smith begin to develop his skills on an instinctive level, pruning by intuition alone. Engaged by this experience and starting to fall in love with the winemaking process, Smith then took a role in the laboratory of Tatchilla Winery where his background in agricultural science proved useful as Smith involved himself in the final stages of winemaking through the bottling and labelling of wine.

Leaving ambitions of becoming a vet well behind him, Smith attained a post-graduate degree in winemaking from the Waite Campus of Adelaide University and in 1998 put his newly learned skills to use at Knappstein Winery in the Clare Valley as a cellar hand. It was only a year later that one of the legends of Australian winemaking, Brian Croser offered Smith a position at Petaluma in the Adelaide Hills where over the next three years he continued his education in cool climate winemaking showing a particular flair for Riesling.

In 2002, Smith returned to the Clare Valley to work with Jeffrey Grosset as assistant winemaker at Grosset Wines before returning to Knappstein where he was appointed senior winemaker and manager in 2004 succeeding Andrew Hardy.

The call of McLaren Vale and the Wirra Wirra tribe came in 2008 when Smith joined as winemaker before taking over the reins following the departure of Samantha Connew in December 2009.

Smith's approach to winemaking is to bring the soul of the Wirra Wirra vineyards to every bottle of Wirra Wirra wine and to maintain Wirra Wirra's reputation as one of the country's most respected and beloved wineries.

Beyond the Woodhenge fence Smith likes to take time out by throwing out a line, doing a bit of globetrotting, spending time with his young family or catching a game of footy. As for the launching of the catapult... well, you will just have to visit Wirra Wirra in McLaren Vale to find out what that is all about!

Wine remains his first love though and it's safe to say that Wirra Wirra is in capable hands under Smith's guidance.

"The way wine evolves and develops...there is something quite magical about it."