

# DRINKING

Angus Hughson

## Shaw thing

The pioneer's newest project

Philip Shaw is a one of a kind. Talented, yes; eccentric, most definitely. He does things his way and always has. He emerged on the Australian wine scene just as the local industry was starting to hit its straps back in the eighties, as head winemaker at Rosemount Estate, where he did much to define Australian chardonnay.

It is hard to overstate how important Shaw's style of chardonnay was in getting Australian wine noticed on the international stage. Big, brassy golden wines stacked with oak and flavour – we've moved past that now but it was a vital first step in the evolution of the variety on these shores. Shaw ended up overseeing the winemaking at Southcorp, with a large stable that included Lindemans and Wynns.

This was no flash in the pan; Shaw had done the hard yards. His path in the wine trade started with a school visit to Roseworthy Agricultural College, at the time the home of winemaking studies in Australia. Shaw was so interested in winemaking that he thought he would give it a go at the age of 12, with raisins and baker's yeasts. Not long after he was washing bottles for Penfolds before overseeing the vintage cellar at Wynns Magill, before he had even left school. He then hit the books before working for Lindemans and then scoring the role at Rosemount.

At its peak Rosemount was a juggernaut that managed to deliver at every level of the quality pyramid. From the diamond label wines through to Show Reserve and its icons, the impressive range was a tribute to Shaw's winemaking and management skills – not many winemakers have balanced the quality and volume equations so well, with fruit sourced across NSW and South Australia. His skills and hard work were widely recognised, including at the International Wine and Spirit Competition, where he was crowned International Winemaker of the Year not once but twice.

From its base in the Upper Hunter, Rosemount had its fingers in a whole range of other wine regions, from Coonawarra and McLaren Vale through to Mudgee and Orange. That breadth gave Shaw a unique insight, if one day he wanted to step out on his own, into the best site to choose. And that day came when in the late eighties he planted his Koomooloo vineyard – 47 acres of vines in the volcanic soils of Orange, 900m above sea level. The choice of a cool climate shows Shaw's foresight as this was at a time where Australia was all about big, flavoursome sunshine-in-the-glass wines. But he saw the writing on the wall a decade before many of his contemporaries.

The first incarnation of Shaw's cool climate dream was under his own name, Philip Shaw Wines, which has over the past 15 years proven to be one of Orange's most



### Hoosegg Seven Heaven Chardonnay 2017

Bright pale golden, the wine displays layer after layer of complex and detailed fruits – precise melon and citrus with oatmeal barrel ferment supported by high-quality French oak, which are all beautifully integrated. You'd be hard pressed to find a better Orange chardonnay.

### Hoosegg Jade Moon Cabernet Franc 2017

The complete cabernet franc package with a beautifully complex and fragrant bouquet – leaf, graphite and violets over a rich bed of blackberries. Dry and only mid-weight, yet it displays a powerful core of dark yet subtle fruits before a long and impressive finish.

### Hoosegg Magic Monkey Shiraz 2017

A beautiful example of cool climate shiraz here with a touch of cabernet sauvignon, just 3 per cent, which adds another level of complexity. There are enticing aromas of white pepper, charcuterie and fleshy mulberries, all wrapped up in a cloak of high-quality oak with fantastic detail all round.

dependable producers, and occasionally one of the best. The past 30 years of owning the vineyard have been an apprenticeship of sorts, as Shaw has got to know the land and the wines it is capable of producing. It has also given him time to prepare for the next great project – Hoosegg, a name only Shaw could think up as he moved away from Philip Shaw wines, which he has passed on to his sons. The Hoo – that's Philip – and the egg are a sign of new beginnings, although the fruit is still sourced from some of the best blocks of the Koomooloo vineyard.

Hoosegg is not just another fine wine project; it's more the crowning achievement of Shaw's career so far as he strives to craft the best possible wines from Orange, and potentially the cooler climates of NSW. The bloodlines from Philip Shaw Wines remain strong but quality has stepped up a couple of notches as these are much smaller production wines, numbering in the hundreds rather than thousands of cases, allowing Shaw to take fruit from only the very best blocks. As at Philip Shaw Wines, it is the wines predominantly made from shiraz, cabernet franc and chardonnay that are the picks right now but you never quite know what Shaw is going to pull out of the hat over the next decade or two.

Hoosegg is an exciting development, not just for Shaw but also for Orange. Every wine region needs a standard bearer, distinctive wines that display a level of quality that places them among the nation's best. With his long experience and exceptional skills, Philip Shaw has managed to deliver both.