WINE JAMES HALLIDAY



My recent columns on Mac Forbes and St Hallett looked at the interpretation of different vineyard sites by the one maker. This week I turn the coin and look at the interpretation of one vineyard site by six winemakers. The brainchild of Tom Harvey, director of McLaren Vale's Chalk Hill, it is a remarkably well-conceived and implemented exercise, born of a desire to understand just how much influence a winemaker has in making a single vineyard wine.

Harvey formulated a plan for Chalk Hill's cherished Alpha Crucis Heritage Block. He chose six winemakers, three male and three female – addressing the question of whether there would be some similarity of style between genders. Each winemaker received every sixth row across 36 rows in the vineyard, and each had the freedom to decide on what date they wanted their rows hand-picked. Once the fruit was picked it went to the home winery of each participant. They had already chosen the oak they wanted, and had complete control over the fermentation process, barrel ageing and fining and/or filtration methods.

Each maker had a track record in small-batch, super-premium winemaking, and a degree of self-belief. The 2012 vintage team was: Emmanuelle Requin-Bekkers, Chalk Hill's winemaker for seven years; Corrina Wright, winemaker at Oliver's Taranga Vineyards, noted for her exuberant personality and winemaking skill; Rebecca Willson, a star at Bremerton Wines in Langhorne Creek; Mike Brown of Gemtree Wines, with bold, strong wines; Steve Grimley of Loom Wine, with a gentle winemaking approach; and Peter Schell, who has a great reputation with Spinifex in the Barossa.

The hand of (wo)man is indeed of great importance. For the other three Alpha Crucis Winemakers' Series wines, got to winecompanion.com.au. Sales of the six-pack go on sale on Tuesday.

### Chalk Hill Alpha Crucis Winemakers' Series McLaren Vale Shiraz 2012: Steve Grimley

Destemmed, whole berries; nine-day open fermentation, plunged three times daily, pumped over every second day, on skins a further seven days, basket pressed, only free-run juice used, matured in used French oak barriques. Dark chocolate, spice, black fruits; exclusion of pressings works well, tannins already in balance. 15% alc, screwcap **96 points, drink to 2032, $58**

### Corrina Wright

Hand-picked by sorting table, crushed, 12° three-day cold soak; wild yeast open fermentation; after five days basket-pressed to oak at 1° baume; racked off gross lees, matured in 25% new French oak hogsheads, the rest in used oak. Mouthfeel very different, especially oak and tannin; medium-bodied, powerful; spice and red fruit notes. 14.5% alc, screwcap **95 points, drink to 2032, $58**

### Peter Schell

One-third whole bunches, remainder destemmed, wild yeast open-fermented, 15 days on skins, peaking at 28°C; pressed to French oak barriques, one-third new, rest second and third use. Spice, herb and earth nuances magnified by fresh palate profile; lingering tannins are fine but will soon soften. 14.5% alc, screwcap **95 points, drink to 2035, $58**

